

25 REVIEWS

Alice · Escape From Monkey Island · Sacrifice  
MechWarrior 4 · FIFA 2001 · Call to Power II

GGG: REP. ALERT 2  
MULTIPLAYER  
STRATEGY

PC

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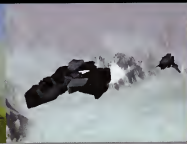
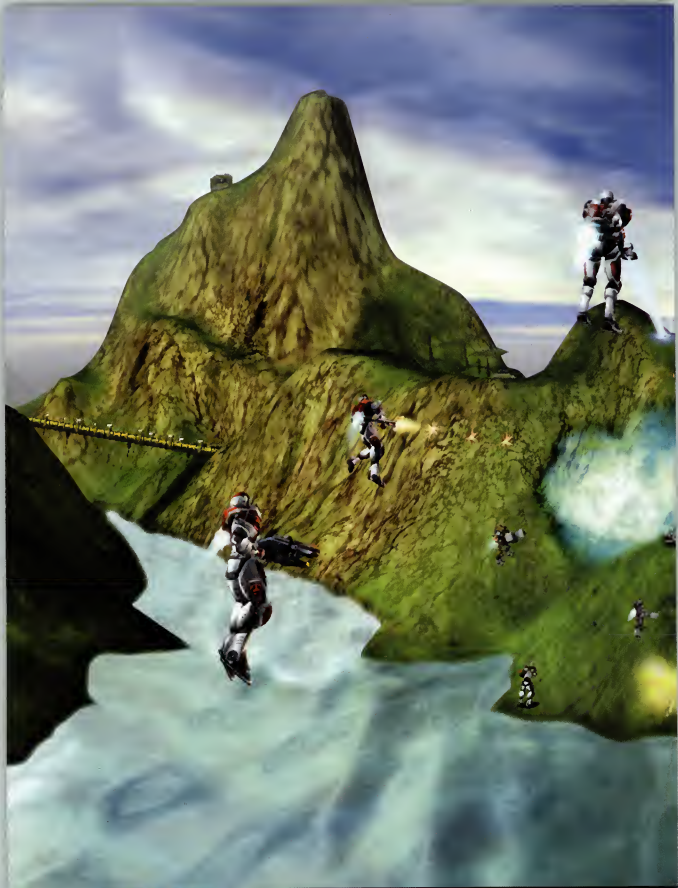
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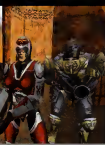


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### PELRAST Armor

The lightest, fastest and deadliest of all armor types, Pelrast armor allows you to fly longer, but not carry the larger, more destructive weapons. It's perfect for flag-capping and sniping, and because of its agility, chews up the heavies in duels.

### HOPLITE Armor

This medium-weight armor serves as an all-purpose suit for offensive, defensive and mid-field battle. You can't jet with the agility of Pelrast but you pack a lot more firepower. It provides decent protection - though not as much as a Myrmidon.



### MYRMIDON Armor

The monster of armors, the Myrmidon is slow and ponderous and works best with vehicle support. But it makes up for its lack of speed with enormous firepower and protection. Only the "Mym" can carry the Fusion Mortar, the most devastating weapon in the Tribes arsenal.

## Get equipped



#### Blaster

A coherent-pulsed-energy cannon, the blaster is the standard Tribes firearm.



#### Plascannon

The plascannon blasts superheated balls of plasma that explode on contact with a target.



#### Shocklance

The shocklance is a close-combat weapon that blasts lightning into a target at extremely short range.



#### Spinfuser

The spinfuser for Momhemmet fires a high-velocity disc-shaped charge across long distances.



#### Grenade Launcher

The grenade launcher loads grenades farther than armored warriors can throw them.



#### Missile Launcher

Primarily used against vehicles, this weapon fires guided missiles and delivers a powerful punch.



#### Chaingun

The chaingun churns out a hail of explosive micro-fuses that quickly chew up targets.



#### Fusion Mortar

King of the battlefield, no other Tribes weapon matches the mortar's destructive capability.



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#### Laser Rifle

The laser rifle is a deadly sniper's weapon, dealing out instant death across unlimited distance.



#### ELF

The Electron Fun Gun drains an enemy's energy in a scintillating display of chained lightning.



#### Hand Grenade

Choose from a variety of grenade fuses, including flesh, fire, concussion and explosive.



## Travel by air



### SHRIKE Fighter

The Shrike's agility and twin chaingun armament make it very effective for ground support - or for blowing other vehicles out of the sky.



### THUNDERSWORD Bomber

The Thundersword delivers massive firepower to the battlefield. With a crew of three, including pilot, bombardier and tail gunner, it's an awesome vehicle that requires true teamwork.



### HAUOC Gunship Transport

The Havoc allows aerial transport of personnel across any terrain. Though unarmed, this ship earns the title "Gunship" from the four heavy armors it can carry.

### Personal Jet Pack

A standard feature of every Tribal armor, the integral jet pack allows you to fly across any terrain to attack lofty targets up close and personal, adding a new dimension to combat - death from above.



## Travel by land



### WILDCAT Grav Cycle

A favorite of snipers and flag runners, the Wildcat is a ground-hugging Turbograv built for blazing speed. To pilot this vehicle you've got to be a daredevil - or a psychopath.



### BEOWULF Assault Tank

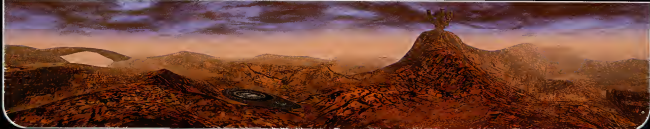
Powerfully armed with both mortar and plasma cannons in its turret, the heavily shielded Beowulf provides a fearsome assault platform.

## See the Galaxy

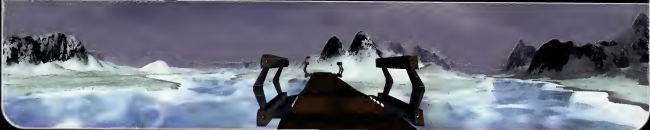
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# 2



## COMING SOON



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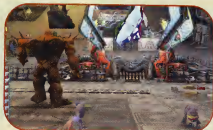
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VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 2 • FEBRUARY 2001



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## Cover Story

# WORLD WAR 2.0

**31** The last war with roman numerals in its name may be long over, but that doesn't mean you have to stop kicking Nazi ass (on your PC, at least). From our world exclusive peek at the amazing *Medal of Honor Allied Assault* to *World War II: Online* to *Commandos 2*, we bring you the latest collection of upcoming games offering the chance to pound on those goose-stepping morons like it was 1942 all over again.

## Scoops

### 13 *Blade of Darkness*

Rebel Acts Studios has been developing *Blade of Darkness* for four years, and have they got something to show you. Featuring terrific graphics and gritty melee combat with a strong strategic bent, this fantasy-based action game is shaping up to be well worth the wait.



*Blade of Darkness*, page 13

### 14 *Clive Barker's Undying*

Not to be left behind, Clive Barker has taken the gaming plunge that Michael Crichton and Tom Clancy took before him. Check out what this master of horror is bringing to your PC.



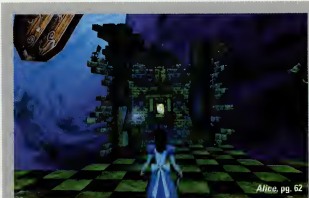
*Undying*, pg. 14

### 16 *The Art of Magic*

Tired of waiting for *WarCraft III*? This *Magic & Mayhem* sequel may have just what it takes to whet your 3D, hero-based, RPG/strategy gaming appetite.



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## Strategy



**124 C&C: Red Alert 2 Multiplayer Tips**  
We unlock the secrets to online victory for Westwood's hit RTS C&C: Red Alert 2. With these brilliant, easy-to-use multiplayer tips, you'll be ruling the online world in no time.

## The Hard Stuff

**103** What do you get when you mix Klipsch speakers, two new force-feedback controllers, an Elsa GeForce2 Ultra card, and a brand-new 19-inch monitor? The Vede buried in this month's hardware section, of course.



## Departments

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We think Jeremy has the hots for *Oni's* Konoko. Why else would he plaster her picture all over this month's CD card?

**22 Eyewitness**  
What's happening to PS1? Get the lowdown on one of the oldest PC game developers around, and find out if they still have a future in PC gaming. Also, we interview Chris Roberts and Ed Fried re: the digital Anvil/Microsoft situation, and show you EA's new version of its hot RTS *Shogun*. Don't forget to check out this month's contest, too!

**114 Extended Play**  
Dan the Man gets on his high horse to preach about a *Deus Ex* mod and ends up discussing tensions in the Middle East.

**116 The Point After**  
The ever-faithful Rob Smolk says he'll always stay true to the PC, and gives a few damn good reasons why.

**117 The Killing Box**  
*Doom* on the go? PC gaming in your pocket? How can such a miraculous thing be true? Colin tells us.

**119 Alternate Lives**  
When online gaming becomes an obsession, Wolf tells painful stories of gaming enthusiasm gone bad, in this month's episode of "Talking with Wolfe."

**120 The Desktop General**  
Napoleon has the wargaming world surrounded, and Trotter wouldn't have it any other way.

**122 Sim Column**  
*X-Plane*. Heard of it? If not, you won't want to miss this month's revelation of the game to challenge Microsoft's Flight Simulator series.

**132 Letters**  
Was *Metal Gear Solid* rated too low? What happened to KFC Bucket Week? Is free-loader.com really free? You ask, we answer.

**136 Backspace**  
Nell Young — no, not the singer — takes a stab at our little questionnaire.

## LETTER FROM THE ED.



"Do not speak to me of rules. This is war! This is not a game of cricket!"

The great thing about a setting like *World War II* is that it offers something for every gaming taste. So when you want to vent a little patriotic fervor, you can do it in first-person, tactically, guns-ablazing, strategically, or in realistic simulation. We've collected the latest info on all the variations, headlined by four (not one, not two, we passed on three, and stuck our necks out for four) big exclusives. Whatever anyone might tell you, there's a whole load of gaming goodness on its way to the PC.

That's certainly in evidence in our monstrous reviews section, which gives you the full skinny on some of the biggest games to hit the market this year. It's heartening to see two adventure games score so well this month — *Escape from Monkey Island* and surprise hit *The Longest Journey* — and give the genre a healthy boost that we certainly hope is reflected in the sales numbers. It all points to a close contest as we prepare for next month's unveiling of the Seventh Annual PC Gamer Awards. Already the gloves are off in the office as everyone prepares to argue the case for their favorites. It'll be a battle royale... (no cheese).

With that, on to the quote contest. The line from *Ghostbusters* last month didn't fool many of you — certainly not Patti Thornhill, who'll receive a game or two from the growing pile around my desk. This month's entries go, as always, to [ednote@pcgamer.com](mailto:ednote@pcgamer.com). Good luck — it's a tricky one.

Rob Smith

Rob Smith,  
Editor-in-Chief

# THE PC GAMER CD — SHINY, HAPPY

Not only is it filled with exclusive games, but its surface is laced with shimmering rainbows, too.



## MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE

www.microsoft.com/games • Microsoft • PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D card

Most of our readers have been around long enough to remember the birth of this series (the old days...how we miss them) and 1995's triumphant return of *MechWarrior 2*, which won our Action Game of the Year award. MicroProse gave the series a go last year, and now Microsoft has stepped up to the plate to carry the proverbial torch.

Check out their efforts here with an exclusive 250MB demo that you can't download from the web even if you wanted to — we said *exclusive*, dammit!



## ONI

http://oni.bungie.org/ • Gathering of Developers  
Pentium 300, 64MB RAM, 3D card

In the works since New Coke was on shelves, *Oni* has finally received its finishing touches, and we're happy to bring you an exclusive two-map demo. We can't figure out how to change the controls, so you'll be stuck with the default keys. Breeze through training and then stick it to baddies hand-to-hand or using one of several weapons.



## RUNE

www.godgames.com • Gathering of Developers  
Pentium 300, 32MB RAM, 3D card

Using a highly tweaked *Unreal* Tournament engine, developer Human Head has crafted perhaps the best viking-based game ever to hit the PC. Now, that may not be saying much, but you should still have a look at this demo, in which melee combat is king and rocket launchers are so "700 years from now."

## GOODIES FOLDER

Ladies and gentlemen, please direct your attention to the Goodies folder. You'll find *Tux Racer*, the coolest Linux-inspired sledding game this side of the North Pole.

When you're ready to install the displayed demo, click this button to launch the setup program. It might help to close the interface at this time.



Unfortunately, we can't provide technical support for the games contained on the disc. However, if the disc itself is scratched or defective, you can order a replacement from <http://support.imaginamedia.com>.



## NO ESCAPE

www.noesc.com • FunCom  
Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 3D card

*No Escape* is what FunCom sees television shows like *Survivor* evolving into in the future. Only then, they'll be transmitted from an orbiting space station, and the cast members will be packing serious heat. The characters in this deathmatch game run around a tiny colorful sphere and lay waste to their co-stars.



## FIFA 2001

FIFA2001.ea.com • EA Sports  
Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, 3D card

Of the seven-odd *FIFA* titles to hit stands, *FIFA 2001* is by far the most visually amazing: computerized soccer has never looked so good. In addition to the high-polygon player models and high-resolution field, the sidelines are alive with active spectators, coaches, and line-men.

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*PC Gamer  
(93% - Game of the Month)*

**"BORG-A-LICIOUS"**

*Computer Gaming World  
(4 out of 5 stars)*



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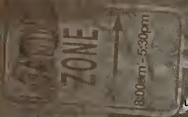
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# When you're online, you know how frustrating it is to get disconne

## DISCONNECTED AGAIN. ENOUGH ALREADY.

There you are happily gaming online when you hear that one little word you know so well, "Good-bye." Suddenly, you're no longer firing a laser-guided rocket at the back of your buddy's head. Instead, you're left all alone with nothing but your thoughts to keep you company. And one thought in particular keeps popping up.



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# Blade of Darkness

If you think you've seen this kind of game before, you haven't



Bloodied textures signal the damage you're taking, while the interface tells you enemies' toughness.

**T**he third-person action/adventure scene awaits its *Citizen Kane*, its *Lord of the Flies* (How's that for a little culture? — Ed.). The original *Tomb Raider* was close; *Die by the Sword* grasped desperately at the ankle of greatness but was ultimately kicked to the gutter; and *Drakan* offered some of the finest boos committed to gaming, while still being drab on the gameplay front.

All those missed opportunities leave the door sufficiently ajar for Rebel Act Studios' *Blade of Darkness* to barge in. With four years of development time already accounted for, the good news is that it looks incredible, and while analogies to literary or cinematic greatness may be a little excessive, it appears to get right pretty much all the gameplay elements that have been lacking in similar offerings.



The engine has great fogging effects. And you can retrieve your arrows from targets for reuse.

For starters, you can choose to play one of four characters — Knight, Barbarian, Dwarf, or Amazon — each with a unique fighting style and specialization in a specific type of weapon. The Barbarian favors heavy two-handed swords and axes, for example, while the Amazon is more adept at twirling a staff. The first map for each class is also different, letting you practice the new moves and giving an original, voiceover-driven introduction to each character, before the storyline follows one linear path to the end.

The combat moves are incredibly well animated, with over 1,700 motion-captured moves modeled for the characters and monsters. Importantly, you start with a limited number of hacks and slashes, and then learn new abilities with new weapons as you gain levels in traditional RPG fashion. A power and defense rating is applied to each weapon and move, and with every level gained you'll gain access to special moves that are executed with simple fighting game-style combos. All the information about the power and difficulty of pulling off combos is contained in clear menus within the game, so there's no need to keep checking the manual.

This combat style adds a great level of strategy to the duels. Balanced by a "fatigue" meter, you can't simply wail on an enemy with manic button-clicking. Combat is a careful blend of attacking, parrying, and carefully timed strikes. Successful combos

result in limbs and heads being cleaved from bodies (though a parental lock will block this feature for the younger audience). Enemies fight very effectively, with a weakened foe backing off and quaffing any health potions it might have while its stronger brethren pick up the fight.

Supporting this level of combat detail is an incredible graphics engine that incorporates amazing flickering-torchlight effects and water-rippling effects, as well as beautifully detailed environment textures.

There's also an adventure game hidden in here with incredible attention to detail. Your character's head will move to look at items of interest in the manner pioneered by *Grim Fandango*. You can pick up any items — stools, stray limbs, rocks — and use them as weapons, or as tools to solve puzzles. My only concern with this gameplay is the sensitive control occasionally required to line up your character on the item you want to pick up. Hopefully, this aspect will be fine-tuned to perfection in time for the game's release.

Given its scope, *Blade* manages to encompass an incredible amount of good ideas, all seemingly well executed. It's finally seeing release is testament to the faith shown by Friendware, the Spanish publishers who have funded the game's development. Hopefully, this will turn out to be the story-driven third-person action game that *Rune* wanted to be and *Drakan* missed.

— Rob Smith

## F.Y.I.

**CATEGORY:** Action/adventure

**DEVELOPER:** Rebel Act Studios

**PUBLISHER:** Codemasters

**PERCENTAGE COMPLETE:** 85%

**RELEASE DATE:** March 2001

**IN A NUTSHELL:** Third-person excitement with a fascinating blend of strategically compelling combat and amazing graphical wizardry.

**WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?** Four years in development doesn't always mean *Darklands*. *Blade's* lighting effects have looked incredible from the start, and the technology appears to have remained on top of the curve throughout the game's protracted development cycle.

# Clive Barker's Undying

Interactive horror from a true legend of the macabre



Say hello to Lizbeth, one of Jeremiah's resurrected siblings who's hell-bent on seeing him dead.

**F**riends like Patrick Galloway, the character you play in *Clive Barker's Undying*, are hard to find. Only a real bud would volunteer to take on the tasks that have been asked of you by Jeremiah. You see, Jeremiah is in some deep doo-doo. His four siblings have come back from the dead, intent on seeing him join them in the afterlife in order to unleash the Curse of the Undying King. Jeremiah, understandably, wants no part of it, and desperately wants to find a way to lift the curse and put his siblings' souls to rest. When he asks for your help, you're more than willing to provide your fighting and spell-casting skill to aid the cause.

So begins Clive Barker's first foray into the interactive medium, as well as your



The Scythe of Brennus is one of eight weapons you'll use on *Undying's* monsters.

journey through this creepy adventure. The horror-meister has had his hand in nearly every stage of its production: "I became very much involved with the design of the characters, and transformed the look of the hero completely," says Barker. "I played with the intricacies of the narrative so that all the wonderful mythological work that the folks at DreamWorks/EA had done would connect with the psychologies of the characters. I think (I hope) the game is both more intense for my presence and more human."

As you work through *Undying's* five quests, you'll encounter all kinds of sickening beasts out for blood. At the end of four of the stages, you'll also have to fight one of Jeremiah's rather dead but incredibly powerful siblings. As if life wasn't complicated enough, your longtime rival, Kiesinger the wizard, will try to thwart your every move, in an attempt to steal whatever power will be uncorked by solving the mystery of the curse.

DreamWorks isn't trying to reinvent the gameplay wheel: "[We] attempted to take a logical step in the FPS genre by combining a strong story with established gameplay," says producer Brady Bell. That doesn't mean there won't be plenty of surprises and leap-out-of-your-chair moments as you explore the bizarre locales of *Undying*. A smattering of scripted events and a several encounters with NPCs will help tell the narrative and clue you in on what needs to be done.

"So much goes into making something frightening — geometry, texturing, lighting, sound design, music, creatures, field of view, player speed, and so on — that without a single element, it can fall flat," explains Bell. "I'm betting what the creatures do to the player will stick with people most. Each enemy in *Undying* has a special kill they'll perform, and some are pretty disturbing. For example, a Howler will wait until you're nearly dead, tear your head off with its claw, and whimper seconds before swallowing it whole."

If you're a fan of Barker's work, don't expect to recognize any of the creatures or characters you'll encounter. "The majority of Clive's influence in *Undying* is original work. That's definitely not to say we weren't borrowing from — I mean, paying homage to — his previous work. Several of our original creatures could be offspring of characters in *Books of Blood* or *The Thief of Always*," notes Bell.

We're confident that Barker can pull off an action game that delivers a truly delicious and disturbing chill. Though even he's not totally sure how things will work out in the end, he feels they're on the right track, adding, "I will tell you this: I've sat in a room with *Undying* and its creators, playing it, and been very severely spooked." If a game can have a reaction like that on someone like Barker, we foresee a rash of industrial-strength underwear sales.

— Rob Smolka

## F.Y.I.

**CATEGORY:** First-person shooter

**DEVELOPER:** DreamWorks Interactive

**PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts

**PERCENTAGE COMPLETE:** 90%

**RELEASE DATE:** February 2001

**IN A NUTSHELL:** All of the action of a typical first-person shooter set in a frightening world only Clive Barker's warped mind could dream up.

**WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?:** Expect gorgeous graphics using a modified version of the *Unreal Tournament* engine, intense encounters, and enough scares to make you wish you'd worn your Depends before booting up.

"Oni shines like no other action game on the market." - CGW

"A no-nonsense mix of hand-to-hand combat and double-barreled gunplay." - CNet GameCenter

# Oni

A DARK FUTURE ... AN UNCERTAIN PAST... NO ONE LEFT TO TRUST.



## FURIOUS GUNPLAY

• An intense action thriller comes to life with exciting Anime style characters and storyline. • Revolutionary gameplay blend of hand to hand and weapons combat. • Easy to learn fighting system with cool, lifelike and realistic moves. • Arsenal of weapons includes pistols, rocket launchers, energy and projectile weapons. • Available for PC, Mac and Playstation.

[ONI.GOOGAMES.COM](http://ONI.GOOGAMES.COM)



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BUNGIE



# Magic & Mayhem: The Art of Magic

You'll play a 3D, hero-based, RPG/strategy game next year, but it may not be *WarCraft III*...

**L**ike the rumbling thump of orcish war drums, the evolution of fantasy strategy games marches on. But some of the brightest generals in the field aren't so sure which way to take it. Amid the confusion, one group has a definite idea which direction to go, and they're already well down the path.

Charybdis Ltd. is a small British development house currently gathering material components for a spell called *Magic & Mayhem: The Art of Magic*. This sequel to Mythos Games' *Magic & Mayhem* will feature the same blend of roleplaying and strategy but adds new ingredients like an improved story, a showroom-new 3D engine, and more spells, creatures, and strategy.

Andy Smith, the producer for *Art of Magic*, assures us that the story is as much an improvement over the original as the all-new graphics. "We were able to employ professional scriptwriters," he says, "and, most importantly, had time to draft and redraft the story and the dialogue scripts. This has resulted, we think, in a captivating backdrop to the player's game world."

For those who missed out on the original, *The Art of Magic* is actually a prequel set roughly five centuries before the first game. You hop into the pointy boots of Aurax, a reluctant young hero who must grow up and survive in a political landscape fractured by the recent death of a powerful grand wizard. You'll have a wealth of NPCs to interact with, including Aurax's sister, who teaches him the art of magic.

Throughout the more than 30 chapters in the story mode, you'll gather allies, learn spells, level up, and perhaps most importantly, open up a fresh can of smiting on fiendish adversaries. According to Smith, the game will have 54 spells, 22 of which



Moving the camera around the battlefield is as easy as shifting and clicking your mouse.

summon various creatures. There'll be more than 50 of these creatures, with new appearances by demons, giants, harpies, dragons, and even boar-riding, undead dwarves.

It's really the creatures that add the most strategy to the combat. You can't let Aurax die, but since his magic is the driving force in the quest, he can't loiter behind the battle lines either. *The Art of Magic* retains M&M's interesting "portmanteau" spell system in which you drag-and-drop ingredients into one of three talisman columns, letting you mix and match their alignment to produce the best effects.

In addition to the standard fireball and meteor showers, Smith told us, one of his favorite spells is the simple-yet-effective morph. "See a creature on the battlefield you want to become? Select the morph spell and click on that creature, and your wizard takes its shape and has all of its attributes." The strategy, then, becomes not simply clicking madly for a lightning spell, but using the game's many minions to their best effect.

All of this takes place in a fully 3D world with a camera that's simple and intuitive to use. We played an early version of the game for several hours, and mastered the camera within the first few minutes. Movement, rotation, and zoom can all be done easily with just the mouse, and if things get really hairy during battle, you can toggle off the tops of trees or houses for a completely

unobstructed view. Also, thanks to DirectX 8 support, we can look forward to features such as skinning and bump mapping.

To top it off, up to eight gamers can play with or against each other via a LAN or the internet. All of the variables seem to be falling into place, and with a little luck, we'll soon see a game with design elements as broad as its appeal.

—Jim Preston

## F.Y.I.

**CATEGORY:** Strategy/RPG

**DEVELOPER:** Charybdis Ltd.

**PUBLISHER:** Bethesda Softworks

**PERCENTAGE COMPLETE:** 80%

**RELEASE DATE:** Spring 2001

**IN A NUTSHELL:** An attempt to mix real-time strategy with roleplaying and adventuring in a 3D world of, um, magic and mayhem.

**WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?:** Even the most experienced developers would cover at the prospect of forging a playable 3D blend of strategy, action, fantasy, and adventure. And what do you do with the camera? We've played *Art of Magic*, and these guys may have figured it out.




"Best Action/Adventure Game of E3." - Game Critic's Award  
"Oni is an action gamer's dream." - CGW

# ONI

A DARK FUTURE...

AN UNCERTAIN PAST...

NO ONE LEFT TO TRUST.



SLEDGEHAMMER HEEL



HAYMAKER



DEVIL SPIN KICK

## BRUTAL UNARMED COMBAT

• An intense action thriller comes to life with exciting Anime style characters and storyline. • Revolutionary gameplay blend of hand to hand and weapons combat. • Easy to learn fighting system with cool, lifelike and realistic moves. • Arsenal of weapons includes pistols, rocket launchers, energy and projectile weapons. • Available for PC, Mac and Playstation.

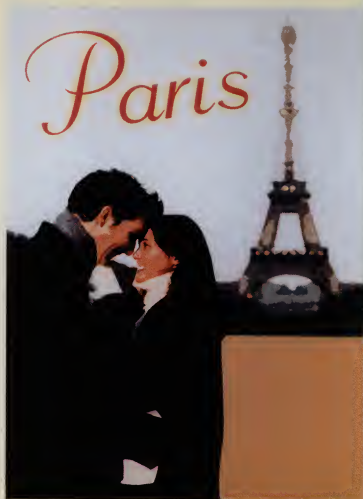
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BUNGIE





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PlayStation 2





# EDEN

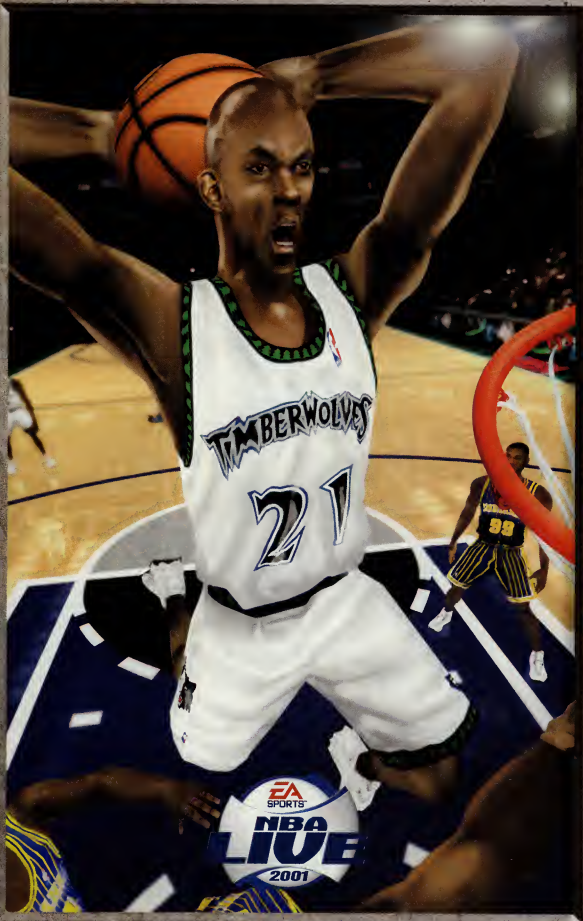


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PlayStation 2





# DUNKUS COLLOSUS

BENCH CATAPULTEN' RAINMAKERS.  
NIGHTY-NIGHT MOVES AND HOW'D-  
HE-DO-THAT AIR SHOWS. THINK  
YOU GOT THAT KINDA GAME?



BRING IT IF YOU GOT IT TO NBA LIVE  
2001. THE BASKETBALL DYNASTY FOR  
THIS CENTURY. NEXT CENTURY.  
AND THE CENTURY AFTER THAT.

IF IT'S IN THE GAME, IT'S IN THE GAME™

EASPORTS.COM AOL KEYWORD: EA SPORTS

## Come Back, SSI!

Delivered from the iron fist of Barbie, the longtime PC developer steers for uncharted waters



Despite the shakeup, SSI's core games remain in development, with *Silent Hunter II* still set for release early in 2001.

On Oct. 19, in a terse press release that reverberated through the games industry, Mattel announced that Gores Technology Group had acquired The Learning Company, putting an end to Mattel's disastrous career as a publisher of PC games.

Most PC Gamer readers don't know, or care, that The Learning Company is the world's second-largest consumer software company, after Microsoft; most of its products, after all, fall into the categories of "educational" and "productivity" software, not games. But you should care, because the Entertainment Division of what was formerly known as Mattel Interactive has, until now, functioned as the corporate umbrella for such important gaming-biz trademarks as SSI, Red Orb, Bröderbund, and Mindscape.

Only 16 months ago, the joining of Mattel and The Learning Company seemed, to Wall Street pundits, to be a match made in corporate heaven. When the \$3.6 billion acquisition deal went through on Dec. 14, 1998, executives of both companies traded high-fives at Christmas parties.

So how come, only a year and a half later, Mattel has dumped its software holdings faster than a gangster gets rid of a \$10 pistol? The Learning Company wasn't even sold to Gores Technology Group — it was unloaded for no upfront cash in return for a

promise that Mattel would receive an unspecified share of "future earnings." Most analysts see the debacle as a classic case of culture-clash between a lazy Fortune 500 fat-cat manufacturing company and a steroidal new-economy firm at which employees kept "programmers' hours" and were used to making passionate go-for-it decisions.

Having rushed into the TLC partnership, Mattel soon revealed that it didn't have a clue as to how to turn it into a profitable arrangement. One former TLC executive, recently quoted in the *Boston Globe* (10/1/00), recalled: "There were a lot of times when we'd be on a conference call with [Mattel CEO Jill Barad] and she'd say, 'I'll get back to you on that,' and the phone would never ring. I can live with bad decisions, or with good decisions...it's no decisions that I have trouble with."



SSI will also release *Harpoon 4* in 2001.

Carl Norman, director of program development for the Entertainment Division (which includes the now-skeletal SSI staff), puts it more bluntly: "None of those people at the executive level knew anything about entertainment software, or anything whatsoever about games!"

Gores Technology promptly sent in "a SWAT team" to oversee the "restructuring" of The Learning Company (including the assets of SSI), and "clarified" SSI's status in a statement released Nov. 3: "Since Mindscape's acquisition of the company in April 1994, SSI has continued as a brand within [the Entertainment Division]. This will continue under our new structure." Software titles beyond the traditional SSI bailiwick of strategy games and simulations will be marketed under an as-yet-undisclosed brand name "more identified with our mass-audience franchises, such as *Myst* and *Chessmaster*."

More surprising is Norman's announcement that, henceforth, the

Entertainment Division, which includes SSI, will devote "three-quarters" of its activity to publishing out-sourced games designed for consoles and only one-quarter to PC titles — the exact opposite of the former ratio. "Let's face it," he says resignedly, "consoles are where the action's going to be for the foreseeable future." Treason or wisdom? Time will tell.

Keith Zabaaloui, executive producer of Atomic Games — which was producing a game for SSI based on the popular *Hammer's Slammers* sci-fi novel — has strong feelings about SSI's move toward the console market: "The industry-wide stampede toward the PS2 and the Xbox strikes me as the equivalent of Mad Cow Disease...I call it 'The Emperor's New Game Machine Affliction [ENEMA]'. Why this mass defection from the PC? Maybe



It: a ways from SSI's 1980 debut, *Computer Bismark*.



The *Pool of Radiance* sequel will ship in Q2 2001, with the extra time being devoted to gameplay tweaks.



We're glad to hear *Destroyer Command* is on track.



Grognaard won't like SSI's shift away from PC titles.

because Sony had such great salesmen — the same salesman who convinced the world that the Sony Walkman could fit in your pocket. It *couldn't*, so Sony had special shirts made for its salesmen, shirts with bigger pockets. Somehow, Sony has convinced publishers to abandon the platform with the largest installed base in history in favor of a platform that has virtually no installed base! It's amazing."

Be that as it may, the SSI label is now part of "a consolidated and reorganized company that's still called The Learning Company," says Norman. "The Entertainment Division is in the process of coming up with a new name that will identify its products as being *entertainment branded* titles rather than educational [titles]."

As for being acquired by Gores (a "culture" capitalist outfit that buys financially distressed high-tech companies and seeks to turn them around, by brute force if necessary), Norman is optimistic: "They haven't been heavy-handed or set unreasonable goals for us. They're cognizant of the loyalty SSI commands within its chosen niche market, and see that as a valuable asset. They're just asking us to do what we want to do anyway — for the first time in many an acquisition, we're being asked to operate as a *business*. That's very refreshing."

"We're turning [the Mattel fiasco] into a case study because it's such a beautiful text-book disaster."

— M. ERIC JOHNSON,  
ASSOC. PROFESSOR AT  
TUCK SCHOOL OF BUSINESS,  
DARTMOUTH UNIVERSITY

So SSI is now, essentially, just a label, which is not much different from the situation back in 1994, when it was purchased by Mindscape. SSI wants to exploit the value of the high-profile licenses it already has, and it plans to expand its hardcore sales of strategy games and military sims by following an internet-sales business model. "We're not going out of business, just retrenching

and cutting to the bone," explains Norman. "We have to find the best way to make these hardcore games and sims accessible to the new user while still being accurate and challenging for the grognard. All that, and make a profit. It's an uphill fight, but we've been given a good opportunity under Gores."

Here's the bright side: Gores Technology Group can't possibly mismanage things as grotesquely as Mattel, and the company does understand the nature of the interactive software business. Moreover, SSI has no plans to scrap its most anticipated titles: *Harpoon 4*, *Silent Hunter II*, *Destroyer Command*, and a sexy new combat flight sim using the *Fliker 2.0* engine, which will include the A-10 as well as the Su-26.

We wish SSI every success in its new incarnation, and look forward to a lot of wargaming goodness in 2001.

## NOW AND THEN

The Top-Selling Games Today.

Rank Game and Publisher PCG Rating



Hoyle Casino 2001

|    |   |     |
|----|---|-----|
| 1  | Roller Coaster Tycoon<br>Hasbro Interactive       | 89% |
| 2  | Berberie Pet Rescue<br>Mattel Interactive         | N/A |
| 3  | The Sims<br>Electronic Arts                       | 96% |
| 4  | C&C: Red Alert 2<br>Electronic Arts               | 85% |
| 5  | The Sims: Livin' Large<br>Electronic Arts         | 85% |
| 6  | RCT: Loopy Landscapes<br>Hasbro Interactive       | 74% |
| 7  | Delta Force: Land Warrior<br>NovaLogic            | 78% |
| 8  | Who Wants to Be a Millionaire 2<br>Disney         | N/A |
| 9  | Hell-Strike: Counter-Strike<br>Valves Interactive | N/A |
| 10 | Hoyle Casino 2001<br>Valves Interactive           | N/A |

...And This Time Five Years Ago

Rank Game and Publisher PCG Rating

|    |  |     |
|----|--|-----|
| 1  | Myst<br>Mattel Interactive                 | 95% |
| 2  | The 11th Hour<br>Interplay                 | 76% |
| 3  | Star Wars: Rebel Assault II<br>LucasArts   | 65% |
| 4  | WarCraft II<br>Blizzard                    | 96% |
| 5  | Hazan<br>Infogrames                        | 85% |
| 6  | Doom II<br>GT Interactive                  | 90% |
| 7  | MS Flight Simulator<br>Microsoft           | N/A |
| 8  | Star Wars: Dark Forces<br>LucasArts        | 92% |
| 9  | The Dig<br>LucasArts                       | 88% |
| 10 | SimCity 2000 Collection<br>Electronic Arts | 95% |

SOURCE: PC GAMES - 2001; SAME GEN. NOVEMBER 2001

## THE PCG NEWS TICKER

LucasArts has announced the official name of its upcoming *Star Wars* massively multiplayer online roleplaying game. Christened *Star Wars Galaxies*, it will be played from a first-person perspective, similar to *EverQuest*. Expect it in late 2001.

Red Storm Entertainment is working on a new real-time strategy game called *Bio-Strike*. You play the CEO of a genetics lab and must use various resources to eliminate a deadly worldwide virus. The game is due to hit shelves in Q1 2001.

Brian Hook has left Verant Software. The programmer had previously worked for companies such as id Software and 3dfx. He cited the "corporate" environment as one of his reasons for leaving the company behind the popular online RPG *EverQuest*.

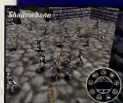
MicroProse's official website, [www.microprose.com](http://www.microprose.com), was recently hacked by a group who called themselves the "Delinquent Hacking Corporation." The code crackers replaced the web page's usual content with a poem. MicroProse issued no comment.

## THE PCG RELEASE METER

cock! Off in the distance! It's games, games galore! And they're all headed to a store near you! Thanks to Rich LaPorte for compiling this list for us. Check out [www.gamgold.com](http://www.gamgold.com) for all the latest info on release dates. Please send news about PC game releases to [laporte@gamgold.com](mailto:laporte@gamgold.com).

| TITLE                         | PUBLISHER     | DATE     | PROGNOSIS             |
|-------------------------------|---------------|----------|-----------------------|
| JANUARY                       |               |          |                       |
| U.S. Open 2000                | Empire        | 01/02/01 | Most likely           |
| Stunt GP                      | GT Software   | 01/03/01 | About now             |
| Monopoly Tycoon               | Hasbro        | 01/18/01 | Chance: Card says yes |
| NBA Live 2001                 | EA Sports     | 01/18/01 | Slam dunk             |
| Kingdom Under Fire            | G.O.D.        | 01/17/01 | Looks good            |
| Icewind Dale: Heart of Winter | Interplay     | 01/18/01 | Probable              |
| Airline Tycoon                | Monte Cristo  | 01/18/01 | Easy landing          |
| SimCoaster                    | EA            | 01/26/01 | Later                 |
| Evil Dead: Hail to the King   | THQ           | 01/27/01 | Possible              |
| Dei                           | G.O.D.        | 01/30/01 | De time               |
| Age of Sail II                | InfusaSoft    | 01/31/01 | Should make it        |
| Battle of Britain             | Empire        | 01/31/01 | Sager                 |
| FEBRUARY                      |               |          |                       |
| Throne of Darkness            | Sierra        | 02/06/01 | Later                 |
| Clive Barker's Undying        | EA            | 02/06/01 | Around now            |
| Iceane                        | Condemners    | 02/06/01 | Green light           |
| Legend of Bladesmasters       | Ripcord Games | 02/09/01 | We'll see             |
| Arcane: Steamworks            | Sierra        | 02/10/01 | Hogefully             |
| NASCAR Racing 4               | Sierra        | 02/15/01 | Cluckered flag        |
| Skip Barber Racing            | Bethesda      | 02/17/01 | Possible              |
| M.O.U.T. 2025                 | Ripcord       | 02/20/01 | Most likely           |
| Project Eden                  | Eidos         | 02/23/01 | Later                 |
| Fallout Tactics               | Interplay     | 02/27/01 | Next month            |
| Peace Makers                  | Red Storm     | 02/28/01 | About now             |
| Commandos 2                   | Eidos         | 02/28/01 | Next month            |

## WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART



Online roleplaying fans have turned up in force and knocked Tribes 2 out of the coveted No. 1 spot. Send your vote to [eyewitness.gamgold.com](http://eyewitness.gamgold.com) with "Waiting is the Hardest Part" in the subject heading and tell us what upcoming game you want to play more than any other. Each month we'll randomly pick one lucky winner to get a free game from our shelf of gaming goodness. See additional rules on page 28. This month's winner is Allen Ko, who cast his vote for Duke Nukem Forever.

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Shadowbane ..... 17%                   | 6. Duke Nukem Forever ..... 7% |
| 2. Ultima Worlds Online: Origin ..... 17% | 7. Black & White ..... 5%      |
| 3. WarCraft III ..... 14%                 | 8. Halo ..... 4%               |
| 4. Tribes 2 ..... 12%                     | 9. Neverwinter Nights ..... 2% |
| 5. Team Fortress 2 ..... 7%               | 10. Max Payne ..... 2%         |



Freelancer is still coming to PC — and Roberts' involvement is

## Microsoft's Conquest Continues

And Conquest looks for a new home

Microsoft has confirmed emerging rumors that it would buy Austin-based developer Digital Anvil, a move that will see the studio's founder (and Origin/Wing Commander alum) Chris Roberts leave the company to pursue his interest in movies. Under the terms of the acquisition, Tony Zurovec's *Loose Cannon* (still some eight to 10 months from completion, according to Roberts) will hit the road in search of a publisher, as will the completed strategy game *Conquest*.

The deal leaves the hotly anticipated *Freelancer* still at DA, to be completed (sometime in 2001) by a new team made up of the existing staff and any picked up from the shakeup. "Some people will not have jobs," confirmed Ed Fries, Microsoft's VP, games publishing, though he noted that places would be found for some of these employees in other Microsoft divisions.

For most PC gamers, the big news is that *Freelancer* remains on track, with Roberts' original vision intact. "I feel comfortable [leaving the project] because the design is down and the functionality is in; it's just the content that's going to take time," explains Roberts. With the new team in place "we're trying to set a schedule to fin-

ish the title [Roberts believes in," adds Fries. According to Roberts, the space-based action/adventure game is still scheduled to feature 200-plus hours of potential gameplay.

And what of the ambitious *Freelancer Online* massively multiplayer project that was planned for development after the main game ships? Fries is more guarded on this, saying, "I'd like to experiment in massively multiplayer games in a number of our franchises...but we've a game to finish before getting ahead of our selves." This reticence certainly indicates that *Freelancer Online* is a long, long way from development, if at all.

When asked why the Microsoft move led to his leaving Digital Anvil, Roberts compared the experience to his time at EA. "I left EA because I had to be in a big corporate entity. I'd have to run a studio, and that's not what I'm interested in," he explains. So what are his plans for the future? "I'm interested in focusing on the film side, and in broadband interactive stuff." Interestingly enough, Roberts told us one film he definitely won't be doing anytime soon is a sequel to his *Wing Commander* movie.

As for *Loose Cannon*, we hope the game finds a publisher; it's worked impressive each time we've seen it.

## THE PCG NEWS TICKER

Ever wanted to tell a developer which games deserve sequels? Now's your chance. G.O.D. Games has a poll on their website that gives gamers the opportunity to vote for which G.O.D. game they want to get the sequel treatment. Find it at [www.godgames.com](http://www.godgames.com).

Infogrames has shelled out roughly \$100 million to acquire Hasbro Interactive and Games.com. The deal gives Infogrames Hasbro properties MicroProse and Atari, including hit game franchises *Roller Coaster Tycoon* and *Civilization*.

Encore Software is bringing a jet ski-racing game to the PC. *Kawasaki Jet Ski Watercraft* will let you race five jet skis through 10 environments using realistically modeled Kawasaki jet skis. Expect to see it not too long after this issue is released.

A batch of new missions and a new mission editor will soon be released for CDV Software's real-time strategy game *Sudden Strike*. The newly released goodies will be part of an as-yet-untitled add-on due on store shelves in early 2001.

## PC GAMER

## RECOMMENDS

Great games for a cold winter's day — or any day.

## C&amp;C: RED ALERT 2



85%

The Reds are back in this great follow-up to the classic RTS.

## NO ONE LIVES FOREVER



84%

Don't miss this swinging spy game starring sexy Cate Archer.

## LINKS 201



91%

A new look and spiffy course-architect option elevate the series.

## TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2



83%

Quite simply the best skateboarding game ever made. Go play it.

## PCG CONTEST

## THE ONE AND ONI

Win a signed copy of *Oni*! We're giving away 10 copies of the game, each signed by the development team at Bungie. To qualify to win one, all you have to do is send a haiku about gaming to [eyewitness@pcgamer.com](mailto:eyewitness@pcgamer.com).

(For the poetically challenged, a haiku is a poem with three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively — like "PC Gamer, my / Each issue reveals so much / I must have my own.") Be sure to put "Oni Contest" in the subject heading, and don't forget to include your address so we know where to send the prize if you win. We'll pick the 10 best poems and reward the writers with a much sought-after signed copy of *Oni*. Remember, one entry per person. Contest ends Feb. 30, 2001. See additional rules on page 26.

INCLUDE YOUR ADDRESS IN THE ENTRY SO WE HAVE SOMEPLACE TO SEND THE PRIZE IF YOU WIN!



## Samurais Return

New *Shogun* edition offers multiplayer, improved graphics

Electronic Arts is working on a new version of its hit RTS *Shogun*. Titled *Shogun Total War: Warlords Edition*, this re-release will include a new multiplayer mode giving you the chance to test your strategic skills against others both online and via a LAN. The package will also include at least six new units,

including Japanese sword saints known as Kensai, battlefield ninjas, and even Mongol Cavalry.

The designers are also adding new buildings such as strategy schools your generals can attend and drill dojos that improve discipline within your armies. And *Shogun's* critically acclaimed gameplay will get

some tweaks, too, with new victory conditions, better ways to manage your armies, new map types, improved graphics, new FMVs, and more. Topping it all off is a whole new scenario that'll have you defending Japan from an invasion by Kublai Khan and his Mongol hordes. Look for the *Warlords Edition* early this spring.

The *Warlords Edition* will also include new map and scenario editors.



## THE PCG NEWS TICKER

Rage recently announced that it's working on a new flight sim based on the new Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jet. Titled *Eurofighter Typhoon*, it's set for a European release. No word yet on whether an American publisher has picked up the game.

Bethesda's futuristic flying/action game *Echelon* has been delayed. Balancing and performance-tweaking issues are cited as the reasons for the postponement. The game is now due to be in stores sometime in early 2001.

Take-Two Interactive has snatched up the publishing rights for Duke Nukem PC games. The deal gives Take-Two the rights to *Duke Nukem Forever* and six previous Duke games. *Duke Nukem Forever* is still on course for a mid-2001 release.

A multiplayer patch for *Deus Ex* is now available. It contains options to enable deathmatch and team deathmatch. *Deus Ex* creator Warren Spector hopes the mod community will use the patch (available at [www.deusex.com](http://www.deusex.com)) as a base for multiplayer mods.

THE PCG PLAYLIST

**Y**up, that's right, last month we got new pictures taken. It wasn't easy. While Rob was more than eager to get a new shot of his mug, Li had to be tasered with a stun gun and then strapped to a chair, all the while crying. "But I like my old picture!" Was all the effort worth it? Who cares! Either way, it was fun using the taser.



**ROB** It's a veritable holiday feast of first-person action right now. Between *Elite Force*, surviving the camp to enjoy the variety in *No One Lives Forever*, and even bulldozing through *Hitman's* criminal flaws to uncover its diamond gameplay, there's never been a better time to be an FPS fan. Oh, and *Red Alert 2* is still great fun.

**COREY** As a huge *Delta Force* fan, I tore into *Land Warrior* the second a boxed copy arrived, fighting a blazing path through the campaign (and *loving* the ambush and jailraid missions). Now I'm dividing my time between *The Fallen* and *Motocross Madness 2*. Huh, that's a thought: a *Trek* motor-vehicle game. Hmm...



**DAN** I had this amazing dream where I came to work one day and there was a pile of *Team Fortress 2* boxes. And we all ripped them open, laughing and screaming, and installed them and started playing and I was the floating Commander and I was braying with joy. Then I woke up. It was a sad moment. *TF2*, when will you come?



**CHUCK** Ah, Alice...sweet Alice. In addition to my continuing tour of duty on *Red Alert 2*, I've phoned my way through turboIt shafts in *The Fallers*, tested out the soft-ware equivalent of *Stuttering John*, the *Quake III: Team Arena* demo, and even re-installed the original *Quake* for a butt-whipping from Jeremy.



**LI** My head is still spinning from the massive doses of gaming I've subjected myself to this month. Monkey Kombat stances are blurring into *Land Warrior* waypoints, and I keep seeing bugs from *Starship Troopers* everywhere. And I still need to start up *Hitman*. So much gaming. How am I going to find the time for *Baldur's Gate II*?



**JEREMY** After briefly flirting with *MechWarrior 4*, *No One Lives Forever*, and *Quake III: Team Arena*, I've finally been hooked by *Hitman* and a beta build of *Project IGI*. I've also been hard at work testing the much-delayed *PC Gamer Olympics UT* map that should be coming your way next month.



**JOE** *Neverending Nights?* Three chapters and 60 hours through *Baldur's Gate II*, I am exhaustedly say I'm still less than halfway through the game. If there's anyone out there who's figured out how to kill the Demi-Lich in the Athkatla Docks area, please email me at [jmitch@pcgamer.com](mailto:jmitch@pcgamer.com) and I'll give you a prize.



**CHIAKI** Tony, Tony, Tony...is there anything you can't do? I've been really digging *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*, and now that our interns have unlocked the fabulous Spider-Man model, I'm obsessing more than ever. I heard a vicious rumor that Spidey has a trick where he can catch his board with his webs! Drool.



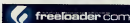
**GREG** Already bored with my PS2, I've come back around to the side of night and right. *The Outforce*, a yet unreleased RTS game out of Europe, has been occupying a lot of my time. In a nutshell, it's *Total Annihilation* in space — which is great since I'm such a big fan of the original. Rock! Check it at [www.outforce.com](http://www.outforce.com).



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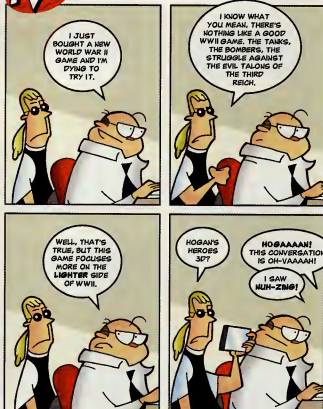
freeloder.com, the website that provides gamers free access to retail-quality videogames, is celebrating its recent launch in the U.S. by giving away a 3dfx Voodoo4 graphics card and a Microsoft SideWinder Precision Pro Joystick!



To enter, send in an email to [eyewitness@pcgame.com](mailto:eyewitness@pcgame.com) with "I'm a Freeloder" in the subject heading. Include your address so that we know where to send the prizes if you win. The winner will be picked randomly. All entries must be submitted by Feb. 15, 2001. Only one entry per person.



by Scott Kurtz



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NEXT MONTH

The Seventh Annual PC Gamer Awards

What a year for PC gaming. Some incredible highs, and lows that sent the forums buzzing with the death knell of the PC platform. In our Special Collector's Issue we'll tell you what games you *must* own from every genre.

And what of the future — not next year, but five years from now? What kind of games will you be playing, and will they be on your PC? Gaze into the PC Gamer crystal ball.





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## WORLD WAR 2.0

*War. What is it good for? Absolutely nothing — except some fantastic new WWII-inspired PC games.*

### MILLIONS FIGHT IN PC WARFARE

BRISBANE, CA — You wouldn't know it by visiting your local software store, but World War II ended well over 50 years ago. (Just in case you missed it — we won.)

Why does WWII continue to intrigue gamers? Because while there've been other American conflicts, none have been as engaging in the minds and hearts of its populace. The Korean Conflict? At only two years in length, it was lucky to inspire a *M\*A\*S\*H* cartridge for the Atari 2600. The Vietnam "police action" wasn't defined as war, but dragged on long enough to spawn the execrable *Nazi*. Due to its never-ending coverage on CNN and technology-driven push-button military action, The Gulf War may as well have been a videogame itself. And don't even get us started on Grenada.

The answer is passion. World War II was the last time a war was actually fought for something rather than an intangible principle or commercial interest. The Nazis were bastards and everyone knew it. They were the perfect all-purpose villain, and remain so to this day. And PC games need a good villain.

Fast-forward to the present. This issue, we've got previews of the best WWII-inspired games the new millennium has to offer, covering a wide range of game genres and gameplay styles. We'll earn our *Medal of Honor*, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, enlist in *Commandos 2*, go undercover on *Hidden and Dangerous 2*, and even battle the massively multiplayer world for a peek at *WWII Online*.

So, turn the page already! Move it, move it, move it...

#### INSIDE:

**FRENCH SURRENDER... AGAIN! WHAT THE HELL?**



This brave GI of Bat 8, Inf Rifle Sqd G, was attacked by a secret Axis weapon, the giant American flag, on the beaches of Tarawa. Fortunately, he escaped with only one limb covered. Now relive his glory... PAGE 37

\*\*\*\* World Exclusive! \*\*\*\*

# MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT

*War may be hell, but this is one first-person shooter that promises to be "hella-good."*

IF THIS WERE HOLLYWOOD, we'd pitch this one as *Saving Private Ryan: The Game*. That might sound like a huge generalization, but it's actually a quite compliment. Steeped in realism, and with some of the best graphics yet seen in a first-person action game, *Medal of Honor Allied Assault* may be the one game released this year that can do the movie justice.

Building on the franchise established with the hugely popular PlayStation game *Medal of Honor*, you play American soldier Lt. Mike Powell of the 1st Ranger Battalion. After induction into the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), you're ordered on a series of campaigns based on real events from World War II. (Of course, some liberties with details have been taken to make things interesting — as well as fun.) Missions will take you to such far-away places as the cliffs of North Africa, the beaches of Normandy, and right into the hornet's nest — Germany.

Currently, developer EALA/2015 estimates that approximately 20 to 24 missions will make it into the game. Missions consist



That guy on the stairs is a spy. Time to take that smug look off your face, officer — permanently.

of several levels, and each level has a series of objectives that you must complete to move on to the next. As the title implies, you'll be awarded medals of honor upon successfully finishing each mission, based on your achievements. (See the sidebar on page 34 for a partial list of medals.)

While earning accolades may give you bragging rights with your friends, it's the objectives that are the meat of the game. You'll be ordered to make strategic assaults (both by yourself or as part of a crack military team), infiltrate enemy headquarters disguised as a Nazi, rescue POWs, drive tanks and other military vehicles, destroy enemy installations, and demolish historically accurate landmarks.

Of course, an action game set during WWII wouldn't be complete without a full-scale assault on Omaha Beach, and *Medal of Honor Allied Assault* delivers. Using the *Quake III* engine — and to our

eyes, it's established as the graphics engine of choice — Omaha Beach is rendered in startling detail. Remember the first 20 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*? Well, it looks just like that — minus a few bloody limbs. Morning gray mist lingers in the stale air, and the ocean-water effects look spot-on. Our jaws collectively dropped during a demo of this level, and achieving that's no mean feat.

**Nazis Invade  
Russia;  
Vodka-Fueled  
Army to Resist**

"DAMN, IT'S COLD!" — GERMAN COMMANDER  
See page 32

## \*\*\* MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT \*\*\*

- ◆ DEVELOPER: EALA/2015
- ◆ PUBLISHER: EA
- ◆ RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 2001
- ◆ WHOSE FREEDOM ARE YOU DEFENDING?

Your character's, and, of course, that of the good of U.S. of A.

### ◆ WHO WINS?

The Allies, and anyone who enjoys great graphics and solid gameplay.



Though it looks like an incredible tech demo, this scene is actually in-game. Ah, the *Quake III* engine.



With level detail as intricate as this, it's easier to hide camouflaged units for some great surprises.



This sleepy European town is picturesque — right up until an artillery shell hits the clock tower.

Starting out in a landing boat, your job is to disembark as soon as it hits the beach, weave your way through enemy bullets and explosions to where the German troops have camped, and then take them out. Making a game out of horrific real-life events is tricky business, but EALA/2015 is trying to balance realism with fun gameplay. As the developers openly acknowledge, an invasion of Omaha Beach can't be implemented with total realism or you'll be perforated by artillery fire as soon as the landing boat ramp goes down — as was the final fate of many real GIs who were part of the initial invasion force.

Other environments in the game are even more impressive. Remember that NVIDIA tech demo featuring a tree with intricately detailed polygonal leaves that was designed to show off the GeForce's Transform & Lighting capabilities? Well, it seemed to us that it would be several years

## THE TOOLS OF WAR

**MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT FEATURES AUTHENTIC WEAPONS USED DURING THE WAR FROM 1939–1945.**



M1 Garand

### ■ PISTOLS

- Colt .45
- Walther P38
- Webley & Scott .25 caliber (silenced)

### ■ RIFLES

- M1 Garand
- M1 Carbine
- Mauser KAR 98K

### ■ SNIPER RIFLES

- Springfield '03 Sniper
- KAR 98-Sniper

### ■ SUB-MACHINE GUNS

- Thompson SMG
- MP40 SMG

### ■ GRENADES

- Mark II Frag Grenade
- Stielhandgranate
- M7 Grenade Launcher
- Molotov Cocktail

### ■ HEAVY WEAPONS

- Panzerschreck
- Bazooka

### ■ MACHINE GUNS

- Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR)
- FG 42 Automatic

### ■ SPECIAL WEAPONS

- Browning Shotgun
- Flamethrower
- Sticky Bomb

### ■ MOUNTED MACHINE GUNS

- .30 cal. M1919A4
- .50 cal. Machine Gun
- Maschinengewehr 42



In the 1930s, anybody could walk into the local pawn shop and buy a Thompson Sub-Machine Gun for about \$30.

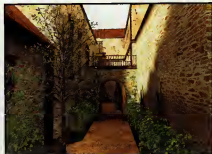
before any game could be released that would even have one tree with half the detail, much less a forest. While not quite on the level of the tech demo, the wooded areas in *MoH Allied Assault* blow every other game on the market right out of the water.

And the world surrounding those trees ain't too shabby, either. This is the first



Is this the gray mist of an early fall morning, or the smoke after a massive barrage?

time in a game where, when your character looks up into the sun, he isn't greeted with lens flare as if he were viewing the sun through a camera, but by blinding sunlight. It may sound like a small thing, but fake lens flare has become as rampant in videogames as kidnapped princesses, and to see the effect done naturally for



One question: How come it took so long to bring the PSX *Medal of Honor* setting to the PC?



Missions in *MoHAA* will vary from stealthy attacks on secluded areas to full-frontal assaults.

once is refreshing. Weather and time-of-day effects are also in the game, letting you fight during morning, noon, dusk, or night and in the snow or driving rain.

As mentioned before, gameplay will be as realistic as possible and still be fun. Hit damage is locational, so a head-shot is an instant kill, while hitting a leg will give that Ratz bastard a limp. And your enemies are numerous: Wehrmacht officers, soldiers, snipers, grenadiers, and engineers; SS Hund-Patrollers (a German Shepherd and an SS soldier); the Waffen SS; Gestapo Officers; and SS Divers and Scientists. Enemy vehicles and weaponry include the Tiger Mark II Heavy Tank, the Jagrd Tiger Heavy Tank Destroyer, Stuka Dive Bombers, and V2 Rockets.

Your weapons are a who's-who list of historically accurate WWII artillery, and each will replicate the original's devastating effect.

Besides the single-player missions, *MoH Allied Assault* will also feature three

multiplayer options: co-op, deathmatch, and teatplay. The game will ship with two co-op-play maps as well as four deathmatch/teatplay maps, although you can be assured that many more user-designed ones will eventually turn up on the web. (This is, after all, the *Quake III* engine.)

If the *Medal of Honor* name rings a bell, it's probably because other games in the series have shown up on the PlayStation, with more to follow on the PS2. That doesn't mean this game's a port, though: EA assures us that *MoH Allied Assault* has a completely original design and that the console and PC development teams are different. And just in case you're concerned that once you win the war there won't be anything left to do, take heart — *MoH Allied Assault* only covers part of the war, conveniently leaving the door open for a sequel. May we suggest the title *Medal of Honor: Hitler Hunt 3D*?



Realistic hit locations mean that having cover before any move will be vital.





And here's the crux: What's more satisfying than offing Nazis? Answer: Not much.

## THE MEDALS OF HONOR

Here are some of the real-world medals that you can earn:

- **PURPLE HEART**  
For being wounded in action in any war or campaign under conditions that entitle the wearing of a wound chevron. For those persons who perform any singularly meritorious act of extraordinary fidelity or essential service.


- **ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL**  
For Heroism, Meritorious Achievement, or Meritorious Service
- **DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL**  
Exceptionally Meritorious Service to the Govt. in a Duty of Great Responsibility.
- **LEGION OF MERIT**  
For Exceptionally Meritorious Conduct in the Performance of Outstanding Service.
- **SOLDIER'S MEDAL**  
For Heroism by those serving with the U.S. Army in any capacity that involves the Voluntary Risk of Life under conditions Other Than Those of Conflict with an Opposing Armed Force.
- **SILVER STAR**  
For Gallantry in Action Against an Opposing Armed Force.
- **BRONZE STAR**  
For Heroic or Meritorious Achievement of Service, not involving aerial flight, in connection with Operations Against an Opposing Armed Force.


- **DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS**  
Extraordinary Heroism in Connection with Military Operations Against an Opposing Armed Force.
- **GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL**  
For enlisted personnel who, on or after Aug. 27, 1940, had or shall have honorably completed three years of active federal military service, or who, after Dec. 7, 1941, have or shall have honorably served one year of federal military service while the United States is at war.

# COMMANDOS 2

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS! NO FUNKY 3D BUZZWORDS, BUT INCREDIBLE GRAPHICS COMPLEMENT SOME COMPELLING TACTICAL GAMEPLAY.



There's nothing like the smell of fried Jerry first thing in the morning.

PYRO STUDIOS IS PRETTY PROUD of itself. *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* was originally developed with the expectation of being a niche game of tactical combat set on the backdrop of World War II. It turned into a massive phenomenon — in Europe, at least — selling around 1.5 million units total of the game and its add-on pack, *Beyond the Call of Duty*. This success confirms the concept that WWII still holds an incredible romantic charm for all the nations on whose soil the conflict raged.

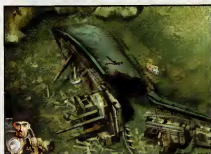
While the original game did good busi-

ness in the U.S., it wasn't the phenomenon it was in Europe, so perhaps you missed it. For the uninitiated, it's a game of real-time tactical combat. You control a squad of commandos, each with different strengths and specialties such as a heavy gunner, a sapper, and so on. You need to use those skills in a variety of ways to infiltrate castles, blow up buildings, steal documents or vehicles, and basically screw with Jerry. While the impressive visuals of the original grabbed much of the attention, it was the intelligent enemy AI that really made *Commandos* a compelling game. Enemies have a field-of-vision (that you can choose to see, showing up as a green cone on the map as they scan their patrol routes), and you have to move your units carefully and strategically past them — slitting throats, sniping from afar, and getting to your mission objective without alerting the entire army. With only a few commandos to keep alive, going in guns a-blazing is not an option.

For the U.S. market, the land battles on continental Europe hold limited appeal,



Peek-a-boo! A small view screen shows you who or what is hiding in a building.



While underwater you can feed schools of fish to lure them to you and conceal your presence.

unless they're under the insulting premise of "We turned up to bail out your collective asses...you'd all be speaking German..." blah, blah, ad nauseum. You'll be pleased to know, then, that the storming of the Omaha beach on June 6, 1944 (D-Day), is the inspiration for one mission. But since *Commandos 2* is about tactics, not wholesale slaughter, you'll be moving your team stealthily through the beach barricades, destroying vital gun emplacements and clearing a hole for the rest of the landing party.

Though the game's not specifically designed to appease the tastes of the U.S. market, the inclusion of missions against the Japanese should bring the impact a little closer to home. One mission, heavily based on the story of *Bridge on the River Kwai*, sees the crack commando team getting involved in the south Pacific. "We didn't do anything specifically to appeal to the U.S. market [in *Commandos 2*]," says Gonzo, the enigmatic project leader (who's definitely human, not a muppet), "but it gave us the

## \*\*\* COMMANDOS 2 \*\*\*

- DEVELOPER: PYRO STUDIOS
- PUBLISHER: EIDOS
- RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2001

### ■ WHOSE FREEDOM ARE YOU DEFENDING?

The campaign incorporates the South Pacific as well as Europe.

### ■ WHO WINS?

Many missions are inspired by classic movies, so who do you think?

## Multiplayer



COMMANDOS 2 MULTIPLAYER options will be limited to LAN play.

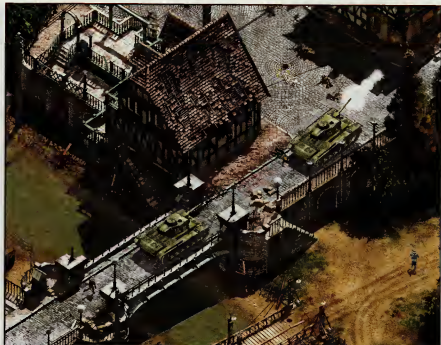
With five or six options currently under consideration, two or three will be featured in the shipping game. Cooperative play is a lock, and has tremendous potential for buddies working together with different characters. A "versus" mode of squad against squad is also a possibility.

chance to flex our creative talents with different settings." Locations include a mission set on the Japanese aircraft carrier *Shino*, where Zeros will take off and land while you go about your business. The artistic quality of *Commandos 2* actually manages to surpass the bar set in the first game, and the art is unique for every single mission — nothing is repeated. Every scene looks absolutely incredible, with minute attention paid to detail in structures, vehicles, and even the animation of the characters.

Joining the cast from the original game is a thief who moves in absolute silence (useful since those krauts can hear foot-falls) and can hide under beds and behind doors as he infiltrates buildings. Also, Natasha, the sniper and seductress who was introduced in the mission pack, is a full-time character here, and is not averse to using her womanly charms to distract a guard's attention while another character moves in for a silent kill, or to steal something from right under his nose.

Also playing a vital role is the bull terrier Whisky, since German guards will ignore the little tyke. A new gameplay addition is the ability to exchange objects between characters, allowing Whisky to bring grenades to a trapped sapper, for example, who can then use it to wipe out eight enemies with one careful pitch.

One of the biggest criticisms of the original game was that missions seemed to



Enemies can "see" corpses, and will react cautiously, looking for where an attack may have come from.

have just one clear solution, and you had to play the game the way the designers intended it. This time around, Gonzo guarantees that there will be multiple ways to complete tasks, with post-mission rewards reflecting the creativity of your success. Going the simple route will be fine, but find a creative way to do the same job, and you'll be better rewarded. Certain restrictions have to be put in place, however, to ensure that you can't "break" missions. "While you'll be able to blow a hole in a wall, you won't be able to go through that hole since it would break the logic structure of the mission," says Gonzo.

The other significant kink on *Commandos* was that it was just too difficult. In the sequel, three difficulty settings will change the way missions play out. On easier levels, an enemy may be removed, or his attributes will be lower, and you won't

be penalized as harshly for making a noise or being caught in a line-of-sight. Pre-mission briefings should also help, with cinematics showing the lay of the land, objectives, and also what to expect as events unfold in a mission.

Many gameplay issues will also be improved simply through the new engine, created specifically for the sequel. It allows some incredible "picture-in-picture" style views as your character peeks into a room through a door or window and a new window opens with a view of what's inside. This lets you sneak into a room while the guard inside is looking the other way. It also lets you snipe enemies through doors and windows — the sniper sight opens in yet another window, giving you a huge amount of information about what's happening all over the mission map. You can also set a camera on a different character away from your main focus, enabling you to keep abreast of his situation while your attention is on others in the party.

It all offers up an incredible level of immersion, and that's a vital ingredient for Gonzo: "I like to seduce a player for 70 hours," he offers through translation from Jon Beltran de Heredia (lead programmer on the project). "I also want to see other games described as being 'Commandos-like.'" Yep, Pyro is pretty proud of its achievement, and rightly so. Expect this sequel to do even better business, particularly on this side of the Atlantic.



You can now swap items between characters — something U.S. gamers tend to like, apparently.



Even the elephants are incredibly textured and animated in the South Pacific settings.



# HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS 2

*Our love of WWII-based first-person strategy games isn't hidden, but it could certainly be deemed dangerous.*

IN THE GAMING WORLD, it seems we just can't get enough of kicking Hitler's Nazi ass. At least that's what Take-Two Interactive is banking on with this sequel, aptly named *Hidden and Dangerous 2*.

Similar to Red Storm's immensely successful *Rainbow Six*, the original *H&D* was a tactical first-person action/strategy game in which you led a team of four heavily armed soldiers through a variety of missions requiring stealth and smarts above brawn and quick reflexes. While *H&D* didn't have the backing of the Clancy name, it did allow you to blast Nazis to smithereens. And thus, it achieved a remarkable following in Europe despite a litany of flaws — both major and minor.

The game wasn't so fortunate in the States, where it received warm reviews but endured poor sales — partly because of intense competition from *Rainbow Six*, a lack of multiplayer options, and relatively little marketing exposure. Still, fans should be happy to hear that the developers are not messing much with *H&D*'s gameplay and superb mission design. Instead, they're focusing on fixing its technical problems, delivering an even more life-like experience, and furnishing lots more eye candy.

If taking out Nazis at the frenetic, balls-to-the-wall pace of *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* ain't your thing, the sneak-around-and-shoot-'em-in-the-back style — à la *Thief* — that *H&D* espouses may be just



While still a long way from release, *H&D2*'s new graphics engine shows plenty of promise.

what you're looking for. And the stealth requirements will be greatly enhanced in the sequel. For instance, each soldier in your squad will have different stealth capabilities, meaning some will be able to sneak around better than others — so you'll have to plan your missions accordingly.

And, "compared to *Hidden and Dangerous*, there'll be a story," promises designer Tomas Piharik of Czech developer Illusion Softworks. This is just one feature that Piharik hopes will help make *H&D2* more appealing to U.S. players. You control the exploits of one Lieutenant Gary Bristol, a young British officer who is the commander of a small, secret special-forces detachment called the Special Ops Section. The unit's *raison d'être* is to undertake extremely difficult missions against

Axis forces in various locations around the world. As before, you will control four soldiers on most missions (for some you'll have less, or just Bristol by himself), but Bristol must always survive.

While it's too early for mission-design specifics, Piharik promises they will have a much more realistic feel. Illusion will accomplish this goal primarily through AI-controlled enemies acting more realistically on their own, including investigating



## Roosevelt Surrenders

"WE CANNOT LET FRANCE SURRENDER ALONE..."  
See page 37

### \*\*\* HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS 2 \*\*\*

- DEVELOPER: ILLUSION SOFTWARES
- PUBLISHER: TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE/TALONSOFT
- RELEASE DATE: FALL 2001
- WHOSE FREEDOM ARE YOU DEFENDING?  
Anybody who enjoys kicking Nazi tail, WHO WINS?

Fans of the original *Hidden and Dangerous*, and gamers who want an alternative to *Rainbow Six*.



With no new *Rainbow Six* game in sight, *H&D2* should get greater attention with its multiplayer option.

noises, patrolling, carrying out various orders, and such, rather than waiting to get shot. Missions will take place during day and night, and in locales ranging from Norwegian Islands blanketed with snow to tropical Burmese forests. You'll also get wet conducting various underwater activities this time around.

A dramatic graphical overhaul should make stickin' it to Jerry much more spectacular and realistic. *H&D2* will use a graphics engine that is roughly four times faster than the original's. This will allow for much more complex objects, real-time lighting and shadows, and for many objects in the mission environments to be blown up or deformed — for instance, you'll now be able to hop in a Panzer and bowl over a wooden guard tower. You'll also get realistic body and ballistic physics — projectiles will have realistic ranges and trajectories, and they'll have the appropriate impact effect on their

targets (and leave scars on the terrain, too). Player-controllable vehicles will include armored cars, aircraft (a first for the game), panzers (tanks), and various "exotic vehicles."

Another major stumbling block for the original *H&D* was a clunky interface that made it difficult to issue orders and control squadmates. A new tactical map that you can view in 3D mode should help address this problem. And last, but by no means least, is multiplayer options. *H&D2* will boast nine styles of play — deathmatch, capture-the-flag, and king-of-the-hill variants — and Illusions hopes to add the ability to play through the game's nine single-player campaigns (23 missions) cooperatively.

All of this adds up to a sequel that's much more ambitious than the original. So, if you're getting sick of taking out terrorists in *Rogue Spear*, you may want to consider changing your targets to Nazis when *H&D2* ships late this year.



Detailed interiors will present great strategic challenges, especially in the planning stages.



The versatile new engine will incorporate indoor and outdoor locations equally.

## NOW PLAYING

IS YOUR TRIGGER FINGER TOO ITCHY FOR YOU TO WAIT FOR THE UPCOMING JERRY-BASHING GAMES TO SHIP? NOT TO WORRY — SEVERAL GAMES THAT RECENTLY HIT STORE SHELVES MAY SATIATE YOU.



### COMBAT MISSION: BEYOND OVERLORD

easily one of the best wargames of the year, is a "1-2 player turn-based simultaneous-execution 3D simulation of WWII tactical warfare." This is a mouthful, and what it means is each side — you and the computer or a friend — plots the moves of each of your units, and then you both watch the execution of your moves succeed or fail in real time ([www.battlefront.com](http://www.battlefront.com)).



### CLOSE COMBAT: INVASION NORMANDY

— the fourth iteration of the CC series — lets you try your hand at kicking Hitler's minions out of their cozy roosts in Normandy (or try to prevent that as the Germans). The game portrays tactical warfare at the squad-level with realistic units, vehicles, and weapons, and the action takes place in real time via a top-down perspective. The game also measures your success or failures against that of history.



Take the basic gameplay of the original *Command & Conquer* and replace the GDI and NOD with WWII units, and you have **SUDDEN STRIKE**, from Illusion

Softworks (the same developer behind *H&D2*). See our review on page 64 and visit [www.suddenstrike.com](http://www.suddenstrike.com) for more details.



For those truly desperate for a first-person Nazi-bashing fest, there's the infamous **MORTYR** from Interplay. Initially banned for its

subject matter (Nazi theme, blood-soaked German helmet on the box, etc.), the game should have been banned for atrocious bugs and horrible controls. However, the environment graphics are decent, the back-to-the-future plot is at least somewhat interesting, and the AI Nazis are dumb as stumps — so rubbing them out is easy. *Mortyr* could be worth a diversionary, cathartic look-see if you simply can't wait for *RTW*.

# WORLD WAR II ONLINE

THE WAR RE-ENACTMENT TO END ALL WAR  
RE-ENACTMENTS WANTS YOU! ARE YOU  
MAN ENOUGH TO ANSWER THE CALL?



Bored of flying spitfires? Jump into another character and do some grunt duty, or hit the high seas.

IF YOU WERE SUDDENLY transported back to 1940 and ordered to fight in The Big One, what would you want to be? (And no, "conscientious objector" is not an option.) Tank commander? Bomber pilot? Naval officer? One of the generals pulling the strings? Or maybe you're just crazy enough to want to be right on the front lines as an infantryman? Well, you can do all of the above and never leave the safety of your living room.

World War II Online aims to be the world's first massively multiplayer online, real-time "virtual battlefield." And, might we add, the most ambitious. Civil War

buffs have been re-enacting individual battles in the real world for years, but now you have the chance to re-enact World War II in its entirety in a persistent online world...and even change history.

WWII Online begins during the Blitzkrieg of 1939, as Germany races to take over the last free European countries after the fall of Poland. After first logging on, you can pick your side (Allies or Axis) and country of origin, and then choose your branch of service — Army, Air Force, or Navy. As WWII Online producer Chris "Mo" Sherland told us: "You start out as the lowest rank and can get in all the branches." Any level of participation is available in the game, from casual gamers who just want to log a few kills as a fighter pilot, to burgeoning generals who will eventually manage entire campaigns.

Gaining rank in the game means going on missions, both given by the game and by other higher-ranking players. By the time you hit 2nd Lieutenant, you can begin giving orders and start assigning missions to subordinates — the successful comple-



Count  
Chocula Joins  
Transylvanian  
Resistance

LOCAL DRAFT BOARD REJECTS TOUCAN SAM:  
TONY THE TIGER REPORTED MISSING IN BURMA  
See page 77

tion of which will affect both their rank and yours. An increased rank also gives you the opportunity to control the game's Strategic System, and the ability to control the supply system and mission system. While most of the game is viewed in a first-person perspective, the Strategic System is presented with an overhead-view dynamic interactive map similar to that of a real-time strategy game, giving you command access to units corresponding to your rank. Any units out of your control will simply not be shown.

You're allowed one character for each country involved in the war — eventually nine different nations as the war progresses — and each character can have access to all three branches of the military. "That means gamers will have a total of 27 different career tracks," says Sherland. While rank doesn't carry over between branches or countries — for example, if you become a Captain in the U.S. Army, that doesn't mean you automatically become a Captain in the U.S. Navy as well — you can build up as many of your characters as you choose...but only to a point. "Once you become a commander, you can't switch sides anymore," says Sherland. "Having access to the other side's sensitive information just wouldn't be fair."

Supplies are a vital part of the game, and keeping the supply routes running unhampered by enemy interference could



"Dude, are you as cold as I am?" "Why would I be standing like this if I wasn't?" "Good point!"

## \*\*\* WORLD WAR II ONLINE \*\*\*

- DEVELOPER: CORNERED RAT SOFTWARE
- PUBLISHER: STRATEGY FIRST
- RELEASE DATE: Q2 2001
- WHOSE FREEDOM ARE YOU DEFENDING? The freedom of any country that fought in WWII — Allied or Axis.
- WHO WANTS? That's entirely up to you and 10,000 of your closest friends.



**EIDOS**  
CONCEPTIVE



The godfather of gangster sims is back. Rule the streets of Prohibition-era America with your own brand of violence and greed as you build the perfect organized crime machine. It's terribly wrong. Of course, that's what makes it fun.



Real-time game play keeps up appearances by day while working bank vaults and brothels by night.



Command a host of new specialist characters to build your team's criminal power and experience.



In large campaign mode, you'll wreak long-term havoc across fifteen counties of the State of Temperance.

FAMILY-STYLE DINING.

**Gangsters 2**  
VENDETTA

It's Disturbingly Authentic  
[www.gangsters2.com](http://www.gangsters2.com)

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THE COCONUT MONKEY GAME CO.  
PROUDLY INTRODUCES

## Gravy Trader: The Board Game

AVAILABLE DURING FALL 1942

mean the difference between victory and defeat. Most are automatically run by the game to keep supplies going to important military facilities, but in some cases you can take a more active role by literally driving the truck carrying crucial supplies if that's the mission you're assigned.

On the flip side of the equation, you'll have plenty of ordnance at your disposal to keep your enemy's supplies from getting to their destination. A variety of ships, including U-Boats, T-Boats, the Pocket Battleship, Southampton Class Cruiser, and Javelin Class Destroyer, will be part of the game's first campaign. Tanks like the Panzer III, Renault R-35, Opel Blitz, and Char Bis B1 will be available, as will a full complement of planes such as the Spitfire MK1, BF-110, Curtis Hawk H-75, and Bristol Blenheim. And real players will operate all of these vehicles, not computer AI. Artillery is historically accurate as well, including the mle 07/15 M34 rifle, VB Mk3 machine gun, the GP-35 pistol, and, of course, those lethal pineapplep known as grenades.

After the opening Blitzkrieg more theaters of battle will open up, such as North Africa and the Mediterranean. Each theater of war will hold more than a thousand players, and be 1,400 x 1,400 virtual kilometers with no "loading zones." That means you could fly uninterrupted from Germany to Poland and only need to stop for refueling. If your character is killed, you'll respawn à la EverQuest and continue the mission to its completion (or defeat).

Sherland estimates that it will take around four months to segue from the initial campaign to the second, and that it may take around two years or more to play through the entire war from 1939 to 1945.



Even cockpit interiors are modeled, so there's no scrimping on any detail, despite the vast scale.



WWII's challenge is for every player to capture the feeling of being involved in a much bigger battle.

And after that? Well, Sherland says that a few "what if?" scenarios may be explored but that the war will eventually be restarted. Says Sherland: "The thing to understand about *WWII Online* is the enormous scope that it has. It's not just a WWII flight sim, or shooter, or strategy game. You'll have to play to fully understand."

Played on Playnet.com, *WWII Online* will be an ongoing project, and vehicles, weapons, scenarios, and graphics will be updated often. The pricing system has yet to be finalized, but it's likely to be a retail-product with the first month free, and then a monthly subscription fee. Scaled at about half the size of the Earth, the game will eventually have 10 linked theaters essentially replicating all of the arenas of battle during the height of WWII, implemented over time as the online war progresses.

But, as we wondered, what if nobody wants to play as the bad guys? Cornered Rat

Software believes that having access to cool Axis weapons and vehicles will supercede patriotic fervor. Secondly, the game may incorporate safeguards to give the dominant side a more difficult time, like making it harder for individual players to gain rank. And lastly, important facilities, like bunkers and bridges, will have automated AI-controlled defense systems that will send out distress calls to neighboring troops as well as fire back on encroaching enemies. "With the strategic system we have in effect, a base's automatic defenses will kick in. Even with no opposing players online, [winning] won't be a walk in the park," says Sherland.

As of press time, *WWII Online* is in a closed beta with around 500 set to test out the game in January. Once all the bugs and balance issues have been worked out, everyone involved hopes to get it into your hands ASAP. And from the looks of it, ASAP won't be nearly soon enough.



There should be enough players to play the bad guys. But not us — we're red, white and blue!



With so many options, the scope is incredibly ambitious. We just hope it all works right.

## RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

ID SOFTWARE IS KEEPING THE  
SEQUEL TO ITS HOT PROPERTY  
TIGHTLY UNDER WRAPS — FOR NOW.



The flamethrower effects have already garnered most of the interest, and rightly so.

AFTER AN IMPRESSIVE SHOWING at E<sup>3</sup> last May, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* became a hot property in the first-person shooter community, garnering plaudits for its awesome *Quake III* engine-inspired effects and the early indication of some great gameplay innovations (picking up grenades and throwing them back at Nazi zombies). Since then it's been all quiet on the Gray Matter front as each new build of the game is assessed by id Software (kinda acting as "executive producers" on the project).

As it stands at press time, Activision is not releasing any new information or screenshots since recent information may not have shown the game in its best light. They estimate that it'll be another month or two before *RTCW* is ready for a proper public unveiling.

Be assured that we'll be there for the full story of zombie Nazi-stomping goodness to be told...and that we'll give you the full skinny on every aspect of this hotly anticipated game.

### \*\*\* RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN \*\*\*

- DEVELOPER: GRAY MATTER
- PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
- RELEASE DATE: Mid 2001
- WHOSE FREEDOM ARE YOU DEFENDING?

Your own — from mutant Nazis.

- WHO WINS?

Who's carrying the flamethrower? Don't you love the smell of roasted zombie in the morning?

## WORLD WAR II MODS

THE FALL OF THE THIRD REICH IS ONLY  
A DOWNLOAD AWAY.

### HALF-LIFE

WAR IN EUROPE: Could be described as *TFC* meets *World War II*. Includes deathmatch, team-vs.-team, and CTF. Play as the Nazis or the Allies in battles such as the D-Day invasion.

[www.warineurope.de](http://www.warineurope.de)

DAY OF DEFEAT: An upcoming teamplay mod with a class system similar to *TFC*'s. DoD is attempting to be as realistic as possible, replicating the weapons and explosives used in the war. However, if you weren't a big fan of the Stamina bar in *Firearms*, be prepared to feel the burn: your stamina will go down when you're emptying your clip into yellow-belly behind, as well as running and jumping. No word yet on a release date, but it should be entering public beta soon. A single-player mode is also planned. Of course, an Omaha Beach level will be included.

[www.dayofdefeatmod.com](http://www.dayofdefeatmod.com)

### UNREAL TOURNAMENT

BLITZKRIEG: 1941: Set on the Eastern Front it follows the phase of the war when the Germans were attacking the Soviet Union in a campaign called

Operation Barbarossa. Available from Reactor 4, the mod strives for realism even to the extent of giving you just one life per game. Unfortunately, it also has one of the worst, most unintuitive interfaces we've ever seen.

[www.planetunreal.com/reactor4/](http://www.planetunreal.com/reactor4/)

### MYTH II

WORLD WAR II: RECON, WORLD WAR II: TITANS: An impressive pair of mods created by Santa's Head for Bungie's real-time strategy game. The elves and wights have been turned into soldiers, the realism has been cranked up a few notches, and the game requires intricate micromanagement to win.

[www.cianplaid.net/misc/series/](http://www.cianplaid.net/misc/series/)

### ROGUE SPEAR/URBAN OPERATIONS

NO LIFE MERCENARIES WW2 MOD: Hanking to play a match of *Rogue Spear* dressed as an American soldier in WWII carrying historical weapons? Well, this is the mod for you. Changing the guns, uniforms, and sounds is about all it does right now, but what do you expect for free?

<http://koti.mbnet.fi/maken/ww2.htm>



The Unreal engine gives *Blitzkrieg: 1941* some visual flair, but it needs work on the controls.

# COMING ATTRACTIONS

**IF FIRST-PERSON OR STRATEGIC ACTION GETS OLD, YOU CAN ALSO POUND THE KRAUTS WITH A VARIETY OF DESTRUCTIVE MACHINERY IN THESE WWII SIMS HEADING TO THE PC IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.**

**\*\*\* BATTLE OF BRITAIN \*\*\***

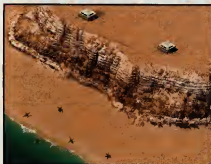
This highly anticipated WWII flight simulation comes from the same folks behind *PC Gamer's* 1999 Flight Sim of the Year, *MIG Alley*. At press time, the game was in late beta stage so it should be on shelves by the time you read this. *BOB* puts you in the cockpit of British Spitfires and Hurricanes, and German ME109s for a 28 mission thrill ride in this epic conflict of summer 1940. You can also take the commander's role for either side and attempt to direct your forces to victory. If our experience with the latest beta is any indication, this is going to be a fantastic and ultra-realistic sim. Look for a review next issue.

[www.empireinteractive.com](http://www.empireinteractive.com)

**\*\*\* B-17 FLYING FORTRESS II: \*\*\*  
THE MIGHTY EIGHTH**

Hasbro Interactive's WWII sim is also (finally) due to take off by the time this issue hits stands. Our enthusiasm for this one has been tempered quite a bit due to the developers yanking multiplayer out of the game. (You were originally supposed to take part in massive aerial dogfights involving large numbers of bombers and fighters, with multiple players manning a single B-17 as pilot/gunners/bombardiers etc.) That said, taking a tough Flying Fortress out on a mission to bomb Berlin is still one of the ultimate thrills if you've an axe to grind with Hitler. Look for a review next issue as well.

[www.b17flyingfortress.com](http://www.b17flyingfortress.com)



Well, it's not much right now, but *Real War* is getting a graphical facelift for the mass market.



Hasbro's B-17 is looking absolutely incredible, as evidenced by this mid-air collision that'll end in tragedy.

**\*\*\* SILENT HUNTER II \*\*\***

This sequel to SSI's top-notch sub sim is still due this April. It'll give you the opportunity to command a WWII German submarine, or U-boat, in the chilly North Atlantic. Germany's U-boats wreaked absolute havoc against Allied shipping in the early years of WWII, largely thanks to stunning levels of patience and pack-hunting tactics. So if you're sick of all the German-bashing in these pages, this may be the game for you.

[www.ultimation.com](http://www.ultimation.com)

**\*\*\* HARPOON 4 \*\*\***

What's this, you ask? It's the sequel to one of the most popular hardcore naval warfare simulations ever. Based on Larry Bond's board game *Harpoon*, *H4* depicts modern naval combat at the fleet tactical level. It's on track to ship this August, and may provide a more relaxed and cerebral experience than the more action-oriented, WWII-based sims detailed above.

[www.ultimation.com](http://www.ultimation.com)

**\*\*\* DESTROYER COMMAND \*\*\***

If you're not sick of it (and who ever could be?), and you're a naval warfare fan, then Mattel's *Destroyer Command* may be just what the doctor ordered. You get to command an Allied WWII destroyer in Atlantic and Pacific-based campaigns against both Germany and Japan. The game is to work with *Silent Hunter II* in multiplayer, so you can hunt-down and destroy human-piloted U-boats to your heart's content when the game ships in late May or early June. DC is also being developed by Ultimatum.

**\*\*\* REAL WAR \*\*\***

Currently in development by SemiLogic and prepping for an April 2001 release by Simon & Schuster Interactive, *Real War* was (oddly enough) originally a training tool for the Department of Defense. After a graphical makeover, it's set to be commercially released as a completely realistic real-time strategy title based on the current real-world capabilities of armies, navies, and air forces around the world. Check this one out if *Red Alert 2's* far-out weaponry is a little too fanciful for your tastes.

[www.slegames.com](http://www.slegames.com)



# sacrifice

The poster features a central figure of a man in a dark, rugged outfit standing on a dark, rocky ledge. He is looking up at a massive, glowing white orb in the sky. The orb is framed by the long, dark, spindly legs of a giant spider that appears to be reaching towards it. Above the orb, a large, translucent, crystalline face with glowing orange eyes is visible against a dark, cloudy sky. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, greys, and oranges, creating a somber and ominous atmosphere.

TO WHICH GOD WILL YOU  
MAKE YOURS?

A sacrifice to

# Charnel GOD OF DEATH

offers the power of destruction  
and carnage.

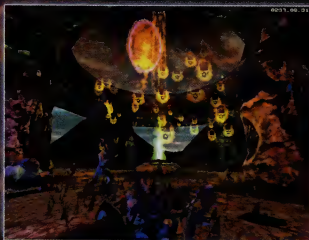
I am Charnel, the God of Strife, Lord of Slaughter, Master of Death. Where there is pain, I am. Where there is suffering, I flourish. Without conflict, without struggle, without me to hate, who would have cause to call themselves just? Only a fool would seek contentment in peace and tranquility.

-- Charnel, God of Death

sacrifice



Your creatures need you! Cast deadly spells to aid them.



Make a Sacrifice, secure your victory, your God feeds well.



Choose a God...  
Make your Sacrifice.



The dark beauty of Charmel's world awaits...

# THE ULTIMATE sacrifice

The Holy War is over.

The Demons of Gologotha have been banished, yet the cost has been terribly high. The Creator, God of the Fyllid, has been defeated and the faith of the people has begun to wane. Petty squabbles among the five remaining Gods has caused the land to split into five mystical territories - each at war with one another. Into this divided land steps a wizard, a man haunted by his past, whose choices will shape the future. Which God will he choose? Will he sacrifice himself to change this world for the better, or will what remains of this world be sacrificed for one God's alone?



*"Best PC Game of the Show."*  
-- ECTS 2000

**AVAILABLE NOW**

*"96 out of 100. It's worth every penny to pick up... Seriously, this is a game of the year waiting to happen and I highly recommend it."*  
-- Game Addicts

*"Shiny is poised to do some serious damage to the conventional wisdom of what an RTS is to be. Sacrifice rewrites the rules and promises to be a huge hit."*  
-- Gamers Pulse

*"Undoubtedly this is my choice for the strategy game of the year for 2000."*  
-- PC Paradox.com

Featuring  
**SCAPEX LEVEL EDITOR**  
Create Single Player  
Campaigns and  
Multiplayer Worlds

*"Did someone say 'Game of the Year'?"*  
-- XLGaming.com

*"Buy this game as soon as it is out! You will not regret it."*  
-- PC Monkey.com

*"An average user will be flinging spells and desecrating alters in minutes."*  
-- Gamers Pulse

*"To sum it all up, this is a great game!"*  
-- Gamers Ed.com

*"I can't imagine a better game coming out this year..."*  
-- Jester.com

**TOP TEN HOLIDAY SEASON PICKS:** *"Sacrifice may just be the kick to the butt that the strategy genre has been waiting for just as 'Half Life' was with the FPS scene."*  
-- Sharky Games

*Interplay*  
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

**SHINY**  
SHINY

**NVIDIA**  
graphics

[www.sacrifice.net](http://www.sacrifice.net)

**MATURE**  
**M**  
ESRB

Animated Blood  
and Gore  
Animated Violence

# Coconut Monkey Fight Club

The first rule of Monkey Fight Club is, You don't talk about Monkey Fight Club.

The second rule of Monkey Fight Club is, You don't talk about Monkey Fight Club.

The third rule is, "No Shirts, No Shoes, No Hands." After all, I have no hands.

And thus it would be unfair for me to be expected to fight a monkey who had the use of his hands. So you have to fight with your arms folded across your chest, limiting you mainly to head-butting, kicking, and biting. It's ugly, I know, but then again, so is monkey-fighting. No sticking your opposite thumbs in anyone's eye, either.

The fourth rule is, If a monkey taps out, yells "Stop," or goes limp, the fight is over, except for the ritualistic mob stomping. The losing monkey is to be subjected to a gruesome barrage of stomps by the remaining assemblage of simians. I think you'll all agree that this is in keeping with long-established codes of primate conduct in such ceremonies.



Our monkey after his first night.

The fifth rule is, Only two monkeys to a monkey fight. Until the aforementioned gang stomping, of course.

The sixth rule is, Only one fight at a time. Special exceptions will be made for Monkey Knife Fights, which shall be allowed to run concurrently with regular, unarmed monkey fights, though I think we all know which one everyone will be watching.

The seventh rule is, Monkey fights will go on as long as they have to, with no bathroom breaks. If a fighter needs a bathroom break, however, he is not allowed to fling his own feces at his opponent. This would break the "No Hands" rule of Monkey Fight Club.

The eighth and final rule is, If this is your first night at Monkey Fight Club, you have to fight, and we won't accept any of your piddling excuses about how you're just an orangutan and your opponent is a 375-pound gorilla. That's just the luck of the draw. No one ever said Monkey Fight Club was pretty.

## NEW AND IMPROVED RATING SYSTEM

Only the greatest games should be rewarded with our coveted Editors' Choice award, and this tweak to the rating system reflects that. Now, with a quick glance at the score box on each page, you can see where the game fits into the great gaming scheme of quality.

### 100%-90% EDITORS' CHOICE

We're banneting down the hatchets and limiting our coveted Editors' Choice Award to games that score a 90% or higher. It's not easy to get here, and damn near impossible to get near 100%. Games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation, an unreserved must-buy score.

### 89%-80% EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your purchase, and is likely a great example of its genre. This is also a scoring range where we might reward specialist/niche games that are real breakthroughs in their own way.

### 79%-70% GOOD

These are pretty good games that we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, though it's a safe bet you can probably find better options.

### 69%-60% ABOVE AVERAGE

Reasonable, above-average games. They might be worth buying, but they probably have a few significant flaws that limit their appeal.

### 59%-50% MERELY OKAY

Very ordinary games. They're not completely worthless, but there are likely numerous better places to spend your gaming dollar.

### 49%-40% TOLERABLE

Poor quality. Only a few slightly redeeming features keep these games from falling into the abyss of the next cutgory.

### 39%-0% DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible. And the lower you go, the more worthless you get. Avoid these titles like the plague, and don't say we didn't warn you!

## GAME OF THE MONTH

Each issue, we select a very special game as Game of the Month. It's a product of note, and it's definitely good, but it's also one that manages to impress in an unquantifiable way. This game is usually of Editors' Choice quality, but it doesn't have to be. For this issue, the winner is...



### AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE



p.50

## EDITORS' CHOICE



Every month, we honor the best games we see with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and a lot of excellent games fall just short of the honor. So when you see the PC Gamer Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

### SACRIFICE



p.96

### THE LONGEST JOURNEY



p.97

## Hardware Requirements

With each PC Gamer review in this issue, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

CATEGORY Action/Adventure

REQUIRED PII 425, 54MB RAM, 600MB HD, 16MB 256x160 3D card

DEVELOPER Rogue Studios

WE RECOMMEND PII 800, 128MB RAM

PUBLISHER EA Games

MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

# American McGee's Alice

**A group of talented EA game creators led by American McGee invite you to follow them down the rabbit hole.**

**S**omewhere, Charles Dodgson (a.k.a. Lewis Carroll), the whimsical author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, must be spinning in his grave. If he were alive today, seeing his beloved Alice — known for her innocence and gentility — transformed from naïf to sullen, angst-ridden killing machine in a third-person action/adventure would surely send him straight back to the hereafter. This isn't Lewis Carroll's Alice — it's American McGee's Alice...and the tea party is over.

Several years have passed since Alice's first trip to Wonderland, and as the entrancing opening cinematic tells us, since then her real life hasn't been quite so wonderful. Though the details are left intentionally fuzzy, a fire has consumed her family, leaving



Don't let these spiders hit you with their venom, or you'll experience temporary psychedelic side-effects.

her alone, catatonic, and institutionalized. Lying strapped to the bed of her padded cell, she's once again drawn to Wonderland by the Rabbit (in the guise of a stuffed animal), who warns her of a great crisis.

Alice isn't the only one who's changed since her last visit. Wonderland itself is a nightmarish vision of what it used to be. The Red Queen of Hearts rules with an iron fist, and has turned most of the inhabitants against you. The Cheshire Cat, who acts as your cynical tour guide and advisor, is mangy and ear-pierced. The Mad Hatter isn't so much "quite mad" as quite homici-

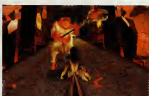


Do children in an insane asylum symbolize Alice's own descent into madness?

dal, happier to fling fiery bombs than crumpets. Now a true lunatic, he's made the Dormouse and March Hare more "efficient" by subjecting them to bizarre Borg-like surgical experiments. Even the once-thoughtful Centipede and the oafish Tweedledee and Tweedledum can't wait to send you six feet under. Alice needs all her wits to defeat the Red Queen and free Wonderland's inhabitants from tyranny.

If Alice's maturation has been torturous, then this new Wonderland's hideously fractured fairytale visage perfectly reflects her shattered psyche. Visually, this is the most

Hitting a gaug, defenseless girl? The Rocks in Chess Village have no shame.



Let me in or I'll huff and I'll puff and — oops, wrong story.



Tweedledee and Tweedledum are more deadly than dopsy.



Jump far your life through the gear works of a clock.



Off with his head! And may it be done with extreme prejudice and furious vengeance.



Defeat the Mad Hatter boss to get his Deadtime Watch, Alice's most inventive weapon.

amazing game I've ever played — each level is such a centerpiece of fiendish level design that it makes you wonder what the level designers were smoking and where you can find some.

The *Quake III* engine has never seen this kind of workout before. Meshing the creepy, playful, ominous, and childlike, each new area looks absolutely nothing like those that came before it. You'll happen upon a quaint schoolhouse teetering in space in *The Vale of Tears*; clamber through the mechanical clockworks of *The Queen's Domain*; ride a leaf down the raging rapids of the *Mushroom Forest*; and even transform into a living chess piece in *Chess Village*. And that's just a sampling.

What's disappointing is that despite the brilliant locations, the underlying third-person gameplay is rather ordinary. Super



Cross the swirling vortex by jumping on flying floor tiles. The concept may be ho-hum, but it's the presentation where Alice really shines.

*Mario 64* and *Tomb Raider* paved this road years ago, and Alice offers a similar assortment of impossibly huge level bosses, jumping puzzles, lava rivers, slippery slopes, and brain-damaged enemies. Most bosses can be defeated with a combination of circle-strafing and rapid weapons fire, and nearly every enemy's AI is so simple that they run straight toward you kamikaze-style when activated. Maybe the Queen's oppression will do that to a guy.

Controlling Alice with mouse and keyboard is easy enough, and the blue cursor used for aiming is unobtrusive. Weapons are like those you've seen a thousand times before, but gussied up enough so that they almost seem fresh. The basic knife (here called a *Vorpal Blade* in a nod to *Dungeons & Dragons*) is your starting weapon, and can slice enemies in close quarters or be thrown from afar. The *Iceward* is handy for freezing enemies or creating a temporary ice blockade, and can be one of the most potent toys in your arsenal — especially against fire-based creatures.

Your deck of cards can be thrown at enemies, homing in on them from a distance; jacks create a (rather weak) cutting attack; you have an exploding jack-in-the-box; and a pair of *Demon Dice* open up a dimensional rift to a creature that can either attack your enemies or, if you're alone, you. My favorite weapon, however, isn't really a weapon at all, but the *Deadtime Watch* that literally stops time in its tracks. It leaves everything, including weapons effects, completely frozen — at which point you can walk among the characters, beating them senseless.

The moody musical score is both eerie and enchanting, conveying a *Fantasia* gone terribly wrong. The sound effects are likewise spooky, and sometimes downright disturbing, such as when Alice enters an insane asylum occupied by crazed children. The manic giggles and sharp "slap" noise they produce smacking themselves in the face with their own fists may just haunt you come bedtime. Alice's voice is perfectly suited to a petulant English girl capable of mass destruction, and you can almost hear the smirk on the *Cheshire Cat*'s roguish lips.

While Alice isn't exactly revolutionary, it's definitely a fun-filled ride. It simultaneously disorients and intrigues; I desperately wanted to know what was ahead even when I'd lost all sense of time and direction. The story's subtext of emotional self-discovery offers few surprises, but once you get into the game you won't really care. Alice is a grand experience from beginning to end, and a fit of inspired madness that I'd wish on anyone.

— Chuck Osborn

## THE REAL ALICE



Lewis Carroll, actually Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, based the character of Alice on a real person, Alice Liddell. She was a daughter of the dean of the college where Dodgson taught mathematics, and was

one of his most prominent "child-friends." It was she who insisted that Dodgson write down *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* after he had entertained her with the story. Historians continue to debate whether or not Dodgson's attraction to Liddell was entirely innocent. However, they all agree that Alice never blew up a giant centipede with an exploding jack-in-the-box.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Stellar, detailed visuals; brilliant level design; intense, atmospheric sound; safer than *LSD*.

**LOWS:** "See 'em, kill 'em" gameplay is nothing special; poor enemy AI.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A visual masterpiece with enough good gameplay to make it a classic.

PC GAMER  
EXCELLENT

88%

|                  |                  |                        |  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Action/Real-time | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PII 300, 64MB RAM, 650MB HD                    |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Microsoft        | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PIII 650, 128MB RAM, 1.5GB HD, 32MB video card |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Microsoft        | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 15   |

# MechWarrior 4: Vengeance

What's two stories tall, weighs 100 tons, and can squash SUVs like soda cans? A BattleMech, of course.

**F**ew series can match the raw emotive joy of the MechWarrior line. There's a singular suspense derived from driving 100-ton metallic monsters bristling with all sorts of awesome war toys.

MechWarrior 4 puts you in the shoes of a relatively unproven MechWarrior-in-the-making, Ian Dresari of House Davion. Your royal family has been brutally murdered, and its rule over your home planet usurped by a tyrannical clan. What better excuse do you need to lead a small rebel force of elite MechWarriors on a rampage of revenge, avenging your family and reclaiming your birthright?

This sounds like the typical fodder for a MechWarrior game story, but it's easily the best narrative yet in the Mech series, and its many twists and surprises firmly grasp your attention throughout the game. It's too bad that most of the plot is relayed to you via postage stamp-size live-action video in the corner of the mission-briefing screen, and that the video features some truly shoddy acting. The dialogue, particularly that of your character, is delivered in outrageous Keanu Reeves deadpan style. When Ian responds to the tragic tale of his family's death, it's like he's listening to Gore and Bush discuss pregnant chads.

Thankfully, this isn't a game in which bad acting can do irreparable damage. This is a Mech game, so it's all about blowing shit up. And shit has never blown up as



beautifully as this. You can destroy just about every object you see by driving your Mech over or through it. Trees splinter into a million toothpicks under your Mech's metal feet. Tanks, trucks, cars, tents, huts, and small buildings are reduced to rubble in your wake, in that unique ground-shaking, dust-kicking, footprint-leaving impact a 100-ton Mech has on a neighborhood. It's a truly visceral experience, and the best interpretation yet of really making you feel like you're behind the controls of one of these massive machines.

And you'll wreak havoc in some extremely stunning and realistic game environments over the course of the campaign's 30-plus missions, spread across 15

diverse game maps. Gone are the desolate landscapes of the previous Mech games. Now you get miles of rolling hills, carpeted with trees and shrubs. There's a lush swamp landscape rife with pools of dank muck. The urban maps are also a beauty to behold. Day and night missions, and environmental effects such as rain, fog, snow, and lightning, all add to the atmosphere.

Through these locations you'll get to take 21 Mechs out for the ultimate test drive — and six are brand-new to the series. The heavy-assault Mad Cat Mark II is the pick of the newcomers: it's a bigger and badder version of one of the most popular Mechs ever. And the medium Uziel, with its dual PPCs, is an all-around war-



Night missions may not require a change in tactics, but they sure do look cool.



Configuring your Mech is easy. Too bad you really don't know what you need before trying a mission.



The mission briefing screen: horrendous acting and dialogue, with few helpful mission details.



rior's dream. All are nicely animated and beautifully modeled — and to scale. The heavy-assault Mechs tower above the battlefield as never before, and the sight of them will instill awe.

Regardless of size, all the Mechs are a blast to drive, thanks to a slick heads-up display that gives you all sorts of vital info — damage, ammo, weapon status, torso orientation — at a glance, and a slick control scheme requiring minimal use of the keyboard. (You will need a decent joystick with a throttle control and/or rudder control option, however.) And a brief-yet-comprehensive training tutorial is available to help prevent new Mech recruits from crashing and burning their first time out.

These lessons are a good thing, because the opponent AI has also made strides. AI MechWarriors will use their long-range weapons from long range (what a concept), and they'll switch to more effective close-range weapons as they advance. They use the terrain to good effect, climbing hills to get a firing advantage or ducking behind buildings to evade your missiles. And they'll attempt to flee when they become heavily damaged, limping off into the sunset leaving a trail of debris, smoke, sparks, and flames in the process.

New weapons include the Long Tom Cannon, which is basically a long-range artillery gun you can strap to your Mech, and the Bombast Laser, which takes some skill to use but can be more lethal than other energy weapons. As always, before embarking on a mission, you can choose your Mech and outfit it in the Mechlab, which, with its simple drag-and-drop configuration, is as simple as ever to use.

Multiplay is also vastly improved compared to Mech 3's, with lag a much less aggravating problem. DSL owners and even the 56k crowd will likely be happy with their experience. Mech 4 offers some nice death-match (team and free-for-all), king of the hill, and capture-the-flag options. However, the option to play through the single-player missions cooperatively is still AWOL.

The game also has some straight-up design goofs that may have you scratching



The environments are populated with all manner of living creatures, from people to deer.

loc:4066 destroyed Edda, Turk  
loc:4066 destroyed Lead Puckie  
loc: Phoenix destroyed Kill on, Fox  
loc:4066 destroyed  
loc: Phoenix has to-R  
loc:4066 destroyed Tele machine  
loc:4066 destroyed Ore Phoenix  
loc: Phoenix has been shot down by  
loc:430 destroyed Lucifer000



I'm glad this ain't MechWarrior 2, where I'd lose honor for shooting this Mech in the back.



Hey, it's the ultimate Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots game! Only with cool damage effects.



Missions are dynamic in that failed objectives can lead to new ones within a given mission.

your head. For one, there are no detailed mission briefings. You get seemingly endless prattle from the video segments, but no run-through of the mission objectives or even any detailed discussion. This makes it tough to properly outfit your Mech and those of your Lancemates (wingmen) effectively until you try (and fail) a given mission. Lancemates need to be well-equipped so they can bail you out of difficulty when the need arises. Occasionally, helpful advice is relayed through the videos, but this is rare.

The day/night option for campaign missions seems to have little tactical use and is largely cosmetic (night missions do look cool, though). And tech updates are usually out of date: you'll be told a new Mech type is available when you've already been using it for several missions.

Finally, when you complete the last mission objective, the game cuts to a cinematic scene in which you have no control of your Mech — but war can still be raging around you! I actually died once in this circum-

stance, forcing a replay of the mission (one of the toughest, of course). It just plain doesn't make sense for this to happen. None of these flaws are extremely significant, but all of them can leave you frustrated at times.

Still, the raw, earth-shaking pleasure of MechWarrior 4 overwhelms its shortcomings. This is easily the series' Wrath of Khan, and driving a Mech has never been as explosively satisfying.

— Steve Klett

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Awesome visuals; diverse missions and environments; engaging plot; badass Mechs.

**LOWS:** Lame videos; lack of detailed mission briefings; useless tech updates.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Hands-down the best of the MechWarrior series.

PC GAMER

88%

EXCELLENT

# Sheep

**A frustratingly fun puzzler that reminds us that sheep aren't just inflatable anymore. [Wow, a lead with no pun! — Ed.]**

**M**other Nature's got a dirty little secret: sheep are actually intellectually superior alien beings. They've been on Earth so long that the critters have forgotten their extraterrestrial roots, and a generations-long addiction to hillside frolics has taken root. So sayeth Empire Interactive's brand-new Lemmings-like puzzle adventure, *Sheep* — and the wackiness is just beginning.

Humanity has been offered a first-rate opportunity to prove which is the dominant species. As one of four herders (ranging from hard rocker Bo Peep to idealistic pooch Motley), you're tasked with shepherding a flock of woolly miscreants to the promised land of Blue Hawaii. But that's easier said than done, considering the abundance of infernal tricks, traps, and murderous gadgets cluttering the game's 28 levels. Even the creatures themselves confound matters further with their singularly daft logic.

The sheep go about their business independently of your actions. Thankfully, they

function according to prescribed behavioral patterns. Herders can only influence these animals indirectly by playing off the flock's instinctual fear of bipeds. Thus, whenever a two-legged mover closes, individuals or groups of the woolly buggers take off in the opposite direction. The speed at which they do so is relative to your momentum on approach. It's a goofy gimmick that works surprisingly well in practice; your method of sheep-herding is based on figuring out how and when to best scare your sheep into making progress through a level.

Frustration comes with the territory, however. Although the level designs are nothing short of ingenious, the curiously themed stages (Jurassic era, space age, and so on) were meant to be played multiple times. Parading a minimum number of sheep safely through a level within a set time period proves a seriously daunting task. Vats of boiling oil, crushing hammers, cannons, grain reapers, and even deadlier devices complicate the issue. A never-ending stream of obstacles and risky bonus point-scoring activities also make navigating each lengthy map a dodgy proposition.

Even with occasional chances to reinforce the

flock, victory's always elusive. Your charges can be gobbled up by killer vegetables, knocked senseless as planes land, or impaled when they fall afoul of booby traps. Power-ups (including a radio and tasty sheep candies) aid in the rescue process, though they're no substitute for patience and forethought. This is the rare sort of diversion that successfully meshes tactical planning with reflex-intensive challenges.

The broad overhead view of the playing field is appealing, but objects possess an unnatural, plastic feel à la *Army Men*. And while the protagonists are so cute you'll think twice about eating lamb chops again, their incessant braying gets old fast. Plus, we could easily do without cinematic scenes of disco-dancing meat byproducts.

Frankly, *Sheep* is a game worth bragging about. It's got a clean, polished look and introduces a novel twist on traditional brain-teasers. It doesn't quite possess the magic quality of *Lemmings*, but kudos to Empire for a job well done overall. As puzzlers go, this game's baaaaaaass.

— Scott Steinberg



Guide sheep to special objectives for extra reinforcements.



All right, who took a whiz in the carrot patch?



Stop... Hammer time!



A not-so-stellar space-age future.

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>CATEGORY</b> Puzzle              | <b>REQUIRED</b> P190, 32MB RAM, 80MB HD      |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> Mind's Eye         | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b> P233, 64MB RAM, 500MB HD |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> Empire Interactive | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> 1                     |

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Tricky, inventive puzzles; adorable; unique theme and concept; solid level design.

**LOWS:** Some hair-pulling frustration; distracting audio; cheap, plastic feel.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Definitely not a classic, but it's a fun way to kill time — and sheep.

**PC GAMER** 79%

GOOD

You just felt a chill...  
but it's not from the cold.

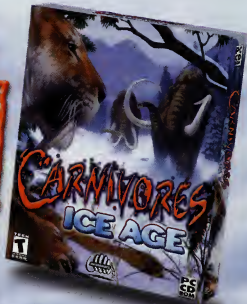
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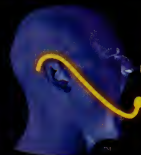
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TEEN (13+)

ANIMATED BLOOD

ANIMATED VIOLENCE



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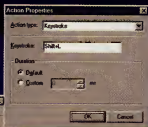
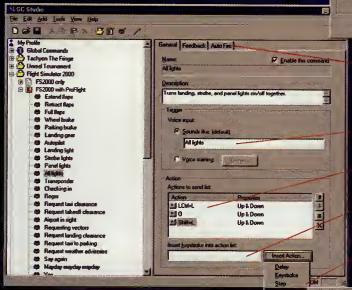
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|                  |                  |                        |   |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Sports           | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PG98, 2GB RAM, 100MB HD                 |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Headgate Studios | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PI 450, 120MB RAM, 1GB HD, 16MB 3D card |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | EA Sports        | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 4                                       |

# Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001

**Even a new developer can't save this series from burying itself deeper in the sand trap.**

**T**urn on any television, and there's a pretty good chance that within an hour (and that's being fairly generous) you'll be treated to the smiling visage of Earl Woods' boy, Eldrick — better known as Tiger — hawk-ing some product or another. At the tender age of 25, Tiger Woods is the most popular, and powerful, sports celebrity in the world. You would assume that with this power comes a certain amount of control regarding the products he endorses. If that's the case, it's obvious he's never played the golf games that bear his name — or maybe he's getting paid so much by EA Sports that he just doesn't care how far behind the curve they are.

At least EA Sports is making an effort to revive this gasping franchise: Headgate Studios has been signed on as the new developer. Unfortunately, it appears there wasn't enough time for this talented group to work its magic on the game engine, having just recently completed Sierra's latest *PGA Championship* game. There's no trace of the excellent physics model or superb real-time mouse setting that made *PGA* such an excellent game, and therefore no way *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001* can compete in this over-saturated market.

The most important aspect of a golf game has to be the physics model: screw this up, and all the bells and whistles in the world won't save you. This is *Tiger Woods 2001* in a nutshell. Nearly everything you would look for in a golf game is here: a huge number of courses (and an architect feature), loads of game types (including the superb President's Cup format), a host of professional golfers, plenty of options for shot setups and camera angles, and a solid online match-up service. Where it all goes to hell, though, is when you actually start hitting the ball.

Everything from the ball flight, to the way the ball reacts to other objects, to the way it rolls on the greens just feels wrong. The graphics don't help much: the digitized golfers don't mesh well with their surroundings, the jagged edges and giant pixels of the trees spoil much of the illusion,



**Tiger? In the sand? What's up with that? Obviously, the game has some kind of bug!**



**The often-subpar graphics are distracting.**



**Play as Tiger, 11 other pros — even Michael Jordan.**

and the horrid use of mip-mapping (swapping textures as they get closer or further away) is enough to make you seaisick.

The ground appears to be made of granite, especially on the greens. Mix this with a ball that has the characteristics of a large marble, and you can see where things begin to go wrong. This deadly combination can make putting a real adventure, as the ball rolls off the slightest slope like it was careening down a sheer vertical cliff, only in slow motion — you keep begging for it to stop, but it just keeps on going, inch by agonizing inch. This same lack of friction is evident on the fairways, too.

The exact opposite effect occurs when your ball finds the rough or sand. Forget about momentum: the rough and sand in *Tiger Woods 2001* could stop a moving freight train. Objects such as trees tend to react the same way as the rough — hit one and your ball will conveniently drop

right next to it. All in all, the gameplay is just a mess.

There's really no way to recommend *Tiger Woods 2001* over any of its rivals. I guess if you just had to play in the President's Cup or couldn't live without seeing cyber-Michael Jordan's seven-handicap swing... No, even then, I'd say go with something else.

— Rob Srolik

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Tons of courses and gameplay options; solid online play; be like Mike and Tiger...

**LOWS:** Laughable physics model; poor use of 3D graphics; just not much fun to play.

**BOTTOM LINE:** If the competition were par, this would be a double bogey. You can do much better.

**PC GAMER**  
DON'T BOTHER

**38%**

# Timeline

He may deserve kudos for *ER* and *Jurassic Park*, but Michael Crichton will cry when he plays his own game.

**W**hat do you get when you mix great graphics and a well-crafted storyline with the world's worst gameplay? Michael Crichton's *Timeline*. This game — the first from Crichton's own development team — proves that you can take an enjoyable book written by a top-notch author and turn it into a pile of unplayable crap.

*Timeline* is a first-person adventure game that takes you to 14th-century France to solve a series of mind-numbingly boring puzzles, most of which seem to involve fol-

lowing a well-marked path, or sliding uncontrollably down a hill, or throwing stuff at people. Rather than make you solve puzzles by exploring and thinking, all you do is follow the instructions of your annoying sidekick Kate, who steers you through in an obvious nod to the mainstream gamer. This good idea in principle falls dead when it causes the game to be solved for you.

You start the game in the near future as a member of some sort of organization (there isn't much explanation) that has access to a time machine. Apparently, a colleague of yours has been trapped in medieval France, and it's up to you to save him. After a laughable 30-second tutorial session, you're issued a pointy stick called a stun wand — so there's no blood and gore even after being shot,



These are the notorious time machines that will sweep you away to a land of enchantment, adventure, and jumping puzzles.

stabbed, sliced, and burned — and sent back in time. Soon after you get to medieval France, one of your partners is killed. Unfortunately, he was carrying the time-machine activator, which breaks when he falls over. D'oh!

The game then turns into a series of puzzles that would barely challenge a third-grader. There are also a few jumping puzzles — because everybody loves jumping puzzles.

*Timeline* is packed with examples of what not to do when making a game. The sound is horrible; the characters' voices are too quiet; there's no background music at all. It's also very short: the whole game took me just over four hours to beat, which is maybe not such a big deal because I was professionally obligated to finish the game and at least it was over with quickly — and a copy of the best-selling paperback novel was included in the box to add value.

Thankfully, *Timeline* does have a few good points. The graphics are great, despite the awkward movement of most of the characters. And the tour mode lets you look around the castles and learn a little history by listening to the monotonous droning of Michael Crichton himself. (In keeping with the game's terrible audio, Crichton's voice sounds like it was phoned in by cell.) All in all, though, this game won't be worth buying until the price drops below the cost of the book contained within.

— Ian Muir



Your steel swords are no match for my pointy stick!



There's no denying how pretty the graphics can be: some of the environments are jaw-dropping.



Did Crichton really need his graduate degrees to authorize the use of all these jumping puzzles?

|                  |                       |                        |  |
|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Action/Adventure      | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PI 305, 64MB RAM, 600MB HD, 3D card    |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Trinkia Computer Ent. | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | A vibrant devotion to Michael Crichton |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Edos                  | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 1                                      |

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Good graphics; historical value; comes with the book; shiny gold foil on the box.

**LOWS:** Easy, pointless puzzles; terrible sound; your sidekick plays the game for you.

**BOTTOM LINE:** We'll always love him for his books, movies, and TV shows.

PC GAMER

36%

DON'T BOTHER

FORGOTTEN REALMS

# Baldur's Gate™ Gate II™ Shadows of Amn™

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- Computer Gaming World

"This sequel features fantastic locales, more spectacular monsters, and more character classes. It promises to be the most ambitious second edition D&D™ game ever."  
- Gamespot

"... Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn will be one of the most important RPG's ever released. It is a beautiful epic, bringing to the field a new level of polish, detail, and design. And, it's going to change everything."  
IGN

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| <b>CATEGORY</b> Adventure  | <b>REQUIRED</b> P200, 64MB RAM, 16MB HD, 3D card |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> LucasArts | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b> P140, 128MB RAM              |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> LucasArts | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> None                      |

# Escape From Monkey Island

**Giant mechanical monkeys and a new 3D engine hail the triumphant return of the *Monkey Island* series.**

**F**ew lead game characters are more charmingly inept than the one and only Guybrush Threepwood. Whether he's waving his sword around like a feather duster or boasting about his ability to hold his breath for "Ten whole minutes!," this swash-buckler is one of the most personable figures ever to inhabit the world of PC gaming.

Escape From *Monkey Island* is the fourth game in the wonderful *Monkey Island* series of traditional adventure games from LucasArts. You play as the aforementioned Guybrush, a shrimp of a pirate who's about as harmful as the plastic swords that come in those fruity tropical drinks. Guybrush started off as a youthful pirate-wannabe in the original *Monkey Island*, searched for legendary treasure called "Big Whoop" in the sequel (*LeChuck's Revenge*), and, in the third installment, traipsed around the Caribbean trying to return his girlfriend to human form after a curse turned her into a gold statue. This last *Monkey* ended with Guybrush saving the day and winning Elaine Marley's hand in marriage.

Escape From *Monkey Island* starts off just as Guybrush and Elaine Marley-Threepwood return to Melee Island from their honeymoon. It seems some evil powers have been at work during their absence — evil Australian powers. A wealthy businessman named Ozzie Mandrill has been buying up land all over the Caribbean and setting up re-education centers to turn dangerous, blood-thirsty pirates into harmless, productive members of society. Even pirates who don't want to sell their establishments have to give in to Ozzie eventually because he challenges them to a duel of insult-swordfighting and never loses. At the same time, a stuffy new politician named Charles L. Charles is trying



You'll have to earn respect in the Scumm bar through insult arm-wrestling.



Charles L. Charles isn't what he seems. Of course, he does bear a slight similarity to a certain villain.



No self-respecting pirate town can be without a high-quality prosthetics shop.

to take over Elaine's position as Governor of Melee Island by having her declared dead.

Guybrush and Elaine set out to make things right. While Elaine goes off to campaign against Charles L. Charles, Guybrush has to clear up Elaine's death declaration. To do that, he has to travel to Lucre Island to meet with the family lawyers, which means assembling a crew and finding a ship. As fate would have it, Guybrush soon finds himself in the midst of a huge conspiracy involving pirates, monkeys, no-nosed bank robbers, the

Church of LeChuck, and LeChuck himself. Eventually, he'll have to uncover the secret of the "Ultimate Insult" — a quip so devastating that it'll turn even the most hardened pirate into a quivering, pathetic, soulless mess. Yes, folks, it all rings of good ol' *Monkey Island*-style/Monty Python-inspired gaming goodness.

While the LucasArts team stuck with the general look and feel of the series, there are notable differences. Perhaps it's because series patriarch Tim Schafer isn't piloting this particular ship, but Escape just doesn't

## I SEE YOU ARE TRAINED IN THE WAYS OF MONKEY KOMBAT

**W**hile *Monkey Kombat* is a bit tedious, there's no denying the comic value of simians showing off their deadly martial-arts skills.



The Drunk on Monkey-ry stance.



The Anxious Ape stance.



The Bobbing Baboon stance.



The Gimpy Gibbon stance.



The Charging Chimp stance.

seem to be as funny as the previous games. I'm not saying it isn't funny at all — the game has some truly brilliant gags (such as the visit to Starbuccaneers), but that certain something — that hallmark of classic status — is missing. Many of the series' characters are back, including the Voodoo Lady, Stan the Salesman, Herman Toothrot, your original crew from the first game, and even Murray, the evil talking skull (I like to call him Bob). You'll also get to revisit some classic locations from the previous games.

Escape uses the 3D Grim Fandango engine, but 2D adventure purists shouldn't be too concerned: the engine looks pretty damn good. Another big change that comes with the engine is the new interface. No longer will you have to use the mouse to move around and interact with objects; now everything is done through the keyboard. While this system may seem a bit cumbersome at first, I was able to adapt quickly.

Whether or not this new control scheme is an improvement is another story. I found some frustratingly odd collision-detection glitches: sometimes Guybrush will just get stuck in an odd-shaped corner; other times, he'll automatically turn around and start walking in the opposite direction. This can be especially frustrating with puzzles that require you to walk in certain directions in a certain

order, because you'll find yourself accidentally steered in the wrong direction after walking into an obstacle.

The main reason this game isn't getting an Editors' Choice award, however, is the puzzles themselves. You'll come across a few that are just plain unintuitive and groan-inducing. My biggest gripe is with the entire Monkey Kombat portion of the game — a part you'll need to master if you ever hope to finish Escape. What is it? It's the most basic form of combat, consisting of five stances.

Each stance defeats two other stances, and each stance is accompanied by a monkey insult. These insults are made up of combinations of four monkey words: Oop, Eek, Ack, and Chee. Each combination lets you transition from one stance to another. So if you were using the Drunken Monkey stance, you'd need to use the right combination of monkey words to transition into the Anxious Ape stance. Bored yet?

How do you find out which stances beat what? You'll have to pick fights with other monkeys and lose, all while taking notes on which combinations make which transitions,



Oh, is he in jail again, in a scene paying homage to the first Monkey game.

and which stances are stronger than others. In all, it took me an entire night of tedious note-taking before I mastered Monkey Kombat. And forget about going on the internet to look for all the combinations — they're randomized with each new game you play.

Initially, it's a blast to watch Monkey Kombat. Few things are more hilarious than seeing Guybrush square off with a monkey half his size: they'll pull off classic Street Fighter moves, hurl fireballs at each other, and even pull off a few crane kicks. Then the realization of what you need to do settles in. Note-taking? With a pencil and paper? In the year 2000? Maybe I'm weird, maybe I'm just a lazy bum [No comment... — Ed.], but I just don't want to have to take long, tedious notes to beat an adventure game. Some may disagree, but personally, I could easily have done without any of it.

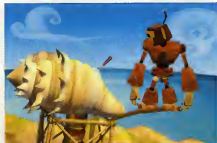
Still, despite some annoyingly make-work puzzles, Escape is a really terrific game. It's fun, funny — if not at the level of the earlier games — and full of memorable, likable characters. The majority of the puzzles are entertaining, the story moves along at a good clip, and you always have something to do. It's a blast to see some classic Monkey Island characters again, and tons of secrets from the past games are let out of the bag.

But most of all, it's been a while since we've been able to relish a great adventure game, and Escape is solid proof that the genre hasn't seen its last day yet.

— Li C. Kuo



The Voodoo Lady makes a return, with even more cryptic tips to help you through your adventure.



Now there's something you don't see every day — a giant, robotic monkey balanced on a plank.



Your new ship is pink and is called the "Dainty Lady."

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** It's a new *Monkey Island* game; lots of laughs; engaging storyline.

**LOWS:** Monkey Kombat sucks; some other unintuitive puzzles; not quite as funny as its forebears.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Definitely not the best of the bunch, but still a welcome return to a classic series.

**PC GAMER** 85%  
EXCELLENT

|           |                    |   |
|-----------|--------------------|---|
| CATEGORY  | Build the strategy | REQUIRED P231 20MB RAM, 16MB HD           |
| DEVELOPER | Freight            | WE RECOMMEND PII 486, 128MB RAM, 300MB HD |
| PUBLISHER | CDV Software       | MAXIMUM PLAYERS 12                        |

# Sudden Strike

**CDV Software has thrown everything but realism into this sprawling WWII tactical combat sim.**

Look on the back of the *Sudden Strike* box, and you'll find a quotation attributed to one "Grandpa" that reads, "One cannot play war." I guess Grandpa never checked out the game inside the box, because it's hard to imagine a game that lets you "play" making war more than this one.

*Sudden Strike's* overhead perspective and World War II setting ensure comparisons will be made with the *Close Combat* series, but anyone looking for slavish attention to authenticity — or even a reasonable facsimile of real life — is sure to walk away from this game shaking their head in bewilderment.

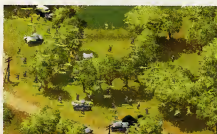
Take the very first Allied Campaign mission, a training simulation where you have to bomb some troops on an island and execute a flanking maneuver to attack an enemy depot. Click on your American GIs, and eventually one of them will respond with a hearty "Jawohl, Herr Oberst!" Yep, *Sudden Strike* is a German-developed game

in the German language, and some of the resultant translation flubs are pure comedy.

Much ado is made of the fact that some scenarios can process up to 1,000 units. But one has to ask, Is this really a good thing? It's a little hard to make the best use of all your units when hundreds of men and vehicles clutter the screen. The only hope of controlling troops in larger battles is issuing orders while the game is paused, but that doesn't change the fact that you might waste the talents of a flamethrower or machine-gunner simply because you couldn't find him in the crowd.

The wide array of available vehicles and weapons is saddled with weird quirks. For some reason, bombers can drop only a third of their payload on a target, and have to fly a loop before repeating their attack on a waypoint. Huh? Placing troops in houses or even brick buildings provides pathetically poor protection against gunfire — look away for a moment and when you check back everyone inside is dead. Troops stand transfixed firing their small arms at tanks until they're blown to bits, even if you order them to scoot to safety.

But wait — there's more. Anti-tank weapons can be towed by troops or trucks, but mortars can't be moved. Field guns fire as fast as a revolver and their shells are equally effective against tanks and infantry — tough to develop tactics against that mighty



Sometimes there's nothing left to do but launch an all-out attack. Well, even if there is, why bother?



The mission where your Soviet paratroopers land in a German-occupied town starts off at a frantic pace.

gun. Snipers can blow up trucks with a few shots, anti-tank artillery can drop shells on speeding motorcycles with near 100-percent accuracy, mortars can tag enemies on the other side of dense woods on the first try, and generally the enemy always hits with his first shot from insanely long range.

It's a mad, mad, mad, mad World War, but the funny thing is, you can get used to all these distortions of reality: just pretend it's *Red Alert* but with historical weaponry and without the hassle of production and resource-collection. With over four dozen single-player missions (36 making up the Allied, German, and Russian campaigns, plus 14 standalone battles) and support for up to 12 players in multiplayer via a LAN or the internet, you certainly can't accuse CDV of short-changing you in the content department.

*Sudden Strike* isn't for everyone, and even those who groove on it might start to tire of the lunacy before they've finished all the single-player missions. But they'll have gotten their money's worth by then, and that's more than you can say for a lot of games nowadays.

— Stephen Poole



Buildings and scenery look quite good at 1024 x 768 resolution, but on that setting, your troops are small.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Tons of campaign missions; good unit variety; up to 12 players in multiplayer.

**LOWS:** Highly unrealistic; enemy AI is either real dumb or impossibly effective; unbalanced units.

**BOTTOM LINE:** There's fun to be had here so long as you aren't expecting a serious WWII sim.

**PC GAMER** 62%  
ABOVE AVERAGE

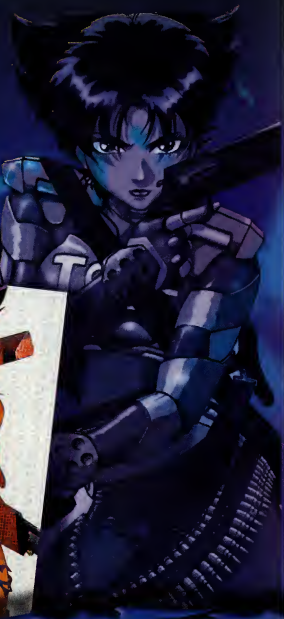
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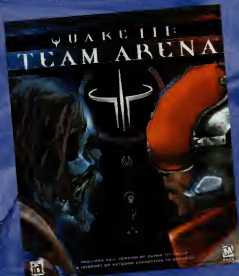
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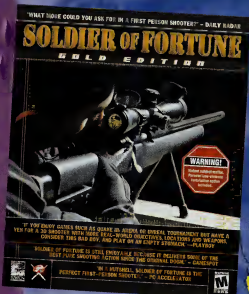
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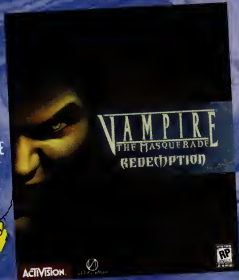
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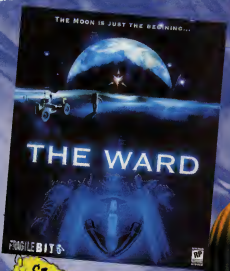
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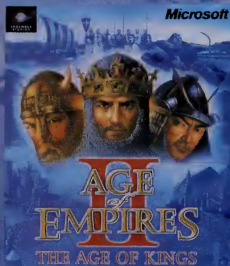
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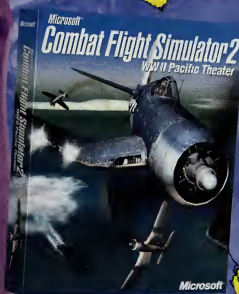


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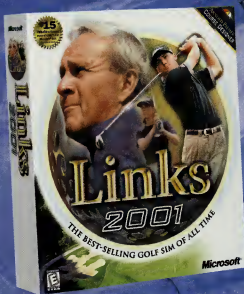


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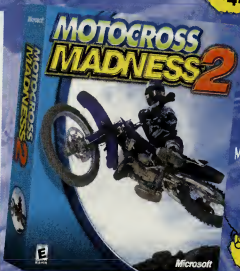
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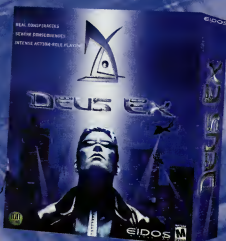
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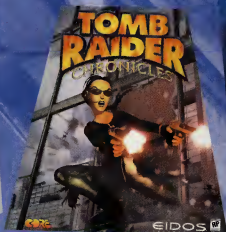
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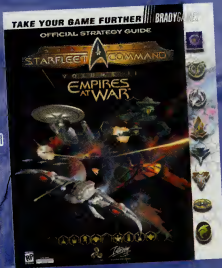
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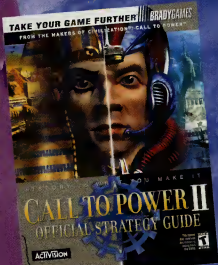
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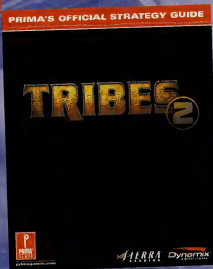
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| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | EA Sports | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 8                                       |

# FIFA 2001: Major League Soccer

**The annual tweaks continue, and ensure that FIFA is the game of choice for any soccer fan.**

It might be time to break up EA Sports' soccer-sim monopoly. As a soccer fanatic, and after spending hours with this latest incarnation, I'd encourage some competition. That's not because *FIFA 2001* isn't great — it is. But it has just enough annoying features that I actually stopped enjoying playing.

Eyebrows were raised within the first few seconds of play. *FIFA 2001* completely ignores a new goalkeeper "six second" move ruling that certainly speeded up the real game. Fair enough, it may be tough to translate on the PC, but I've five ideas on how to do it right now — why was no nod given to the new rules? And where can I reconfigure the game-pad buttons? Due to tweaks to the basic passing game, the "through ball" option is more effective than the default "pass," but the "through ball" button is located inconveniently on the top row of the MS SideWinder pad (still the pad of choice for the discerning gamer).

Likely in response to complaints about the game being too fast — like a pinball game — the developers have slowed the player passing animations. The side effect is that the game's flow is likewise sluggish. Unfortunately, the



When goalkeepers parry shots, the ball bounces away at realistic angles.

opponent AI has not been similarly slowed, and tight midfield passes are almost impossible before you're barged off the ball by an opponent who's evidently thinking several times faster than your player is acting. (And that's only on medium difficulty.)

And for the sake of all that is good in the world, EA Sports must fix the damn menu screens. They're unintuitive and, to be blunt, look like shit.

Now, here are all the reasons that any soccer fan should own *FIFA 2001*. It's definitely the best in its class, even when pitted against its European-released competition. It looks absolutely stunning. The level of detail in the animations gets better and better, with greater attention to detail in individual star players from around the world. The stadiums look great, complete with bobbing crowds. The player's perspective has moved closer to the action, making the players bigger and better-proportioned to the screen. The trade-



Seemingly innocuous tackles are penalized while others go unpunished.

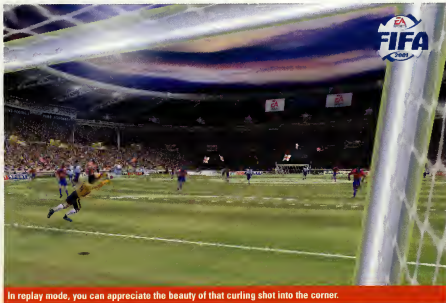
off is that I now have to use the onscreen radar to keep tabs on off-screen teammates. Still, all this game needs in the first hour or so of play time is to get one sweet passing move together — say, a shimmy from one player, a quick one-touch pass from another, a cushioned header to a teammate, solid shielding of the ball from a defender, a full-speed dash down the touchline and cross into the penalty area, and a diving header from the star striker into the top corner past a flailing goalkeeper — to get you hooked.

Then you hit up the replay mode and watch from a variety of angles, show off to your friends, and explain to them why what you just did was so cool.

The franchise mode (such as it is) with player transfers is still incredibly primitive, and only for the hardcore. The full inclusion of the Major League Soccer teams is certainly welcome, as is the decision to ditch last year's awful U.S. commentary, returning to the dulcet tones of UK legend John Motson.

Ultimately, this is the only soccer sim available, so if you want the action, you've got to shop here. Owners of *FIFA 2000* (who downloaded the 80MB commentary patch) should try the demo before rushing to upgrade. To soccer-sim newbies, welcome — it's a high-quality franchise that gets just a tad better every time.

—Rob Smith



In replay mode, you can appreciate the beauty of that curling shot into the corner.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Looks incredible; flowing moves look like the greatest soccer ever played.

**LOWS:** Tweaks to game speed not fully thought through; fixing certain elements breaks others; crappy menus.

**BOTTOM LINE:** In a field of one, it's king.

**PC GAMER** **80%**  
EXCELLENT

|                  |                      |                        |                                      |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | First-person shooter | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | P233, 32MB RAM, 40MB HD              |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Rivend               | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | P1 400, 64MB RAM, 1x CD-ROM, 3D card |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Sierra               | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 32                                   |

# Gunman Chronicles

Sierra's still trying to eek some life out of *Half-Life*, but the results are sometimes half-baked.

There's at least one reason why the PC will never fade away as a games platform: you don't have to ask anyone's permission to make games for it. The mod community that has grown up around *Half-Life* has helped give that game its reputation as not only the best single-player shooter around, but the most popular multiplayer shooter as well. Whether in the unparalleled teampay of *Counter-Strike*, or innovative single-player mods like Neil Manke's *They Hunger*, Valve's masterpiece inspires a lot of great work.

This latest addition is by Rivend Studios, an international collection of amateur modmakers who never actually met each other while working on the project. Sierra and Valve were so impressed with the effort that they decided to buy the total conversion and market it as a *Half-Life*-powered shooter.

Well, as much as we'd like to trumpet the story of the little modmakers who hit the big time, there's just no electricity coming from *Gunman Chronicles*. Playing the game is like listening to a good Zeppelin cover band hit all the right notes but capture none of the energy. It has the same tram-ride intro as *Half-Life*, tons of scripted sequences, the same great AI, and even some nice modifications to the standard weapons. But it's got none of Valve's spark.

*Gunman Chronicles* lacks the polish and professionalism that we've come to expect from full-priced games. The story is a bizarre gumbo of interesting ingredients that never



The ability to modify your weapons, such as changing the shotgun to a riotgun, is one of *Gunman's* best features.

comes to a boil. The "gunmen" in question are space marines who inexplicably wear the clothing of Confederate soldiers. You play as Major Archer, who, like Gordon Freeman, never utters a word as he battles against a deranged villain known simply as "The General." Along the way there are robots and dinosaurs, and a trite story about a sentient, female-voiced computer system that sounds like it failed the System Shock auditions.

We hate to say it, but the whole game feels amateurish. The *Half-Life* "engine" is nothing more than a modified amalgamation of the *Quake/Quake II* engines, and it's clearly past its prime. From the ugly, static bitmap backgrounds to the crude low-poly character models, *Gunman* would have been visually ordinary two years ago. It's suffering in the new century. The audio is equally poor, with horrible voice-acting that sounds like it was recorded and mixed in a metal drum.

There are, however, a couple points of light. Instead of an alt-fire system, *Gunman* lets you "modify" most of the weapons for different situations, such as turning the ordinary blaster into a deadly sniper rifle. It also features some very cool tanks that you can guide easily with the standard mouse-and-keyboard setup. They reminded me of the classic SNK quarter-muncher *Ikaru Warriors*, and were one of the best parts of the game.

*Gunman's* multiplayer mode features only five maps, each of which is just a modified version of a level from the single-player campaign. There's nothing particularly new or interesting about *Gunman's* style of deathmatch, and it certainly won't pull play-



This guy is much less dangerous than he looks.

ers away from excellent team-based mods such as *Firearms* or *Counter-Strike*.

Valve and Sierra definitely deserve credit for recognizing and supporting their mod community, but *Gunman Chronicles* is simply a competent total conversion that doesn't deserve to be packaged as its own game. Players itching to spend some computer cash will be better served picking up *Elite Force*, *No One Lives Forever*, or *Hiltman*.

— Jim Preston



The final, climactic battle is all-too-routine.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Interesting modification of weapons; cool vehicles; *Half-Life's* scripting and AI.

**LOWS:** Outdated graphics; poor audio; motley collection of story ideas; no multiplayer spark.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Better *Half-Life* fixes can be downloaded for free.

PC GAMER  
MERELY OKAY

52%

|                  |           |                        |                             |
|------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Strategy  | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PII 300, 64MB RAM, 300MB HD |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Blue Byte | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PII 450, 128MB RAM          |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Blue Byte | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 8                           |

# Battle Isle: The Androsia War

Ideas that look good on the drawing board don't always work out so well. Like this one.

I'm a big fan of turn-based strategy games, and I hope they never go away. I root hard for games like this one, No. 5 in the long-running Battle Isle series. Unfortunately, a better name for *Battle Isle: The Androsia War* would have been the "I'm-Getting-Drowsier War."

*Androsia* meshes traditional turn-based tactical combat and real-time economic simulation. The idea is that you're given enough time to ponder combat strategy for each of your units, but still feel the tension and sweat induced by managing a war economy in real time. This sure sounds good on paper, but as implemented here, it's a bit of a snooze.

The story picks up from *Blue Byte's Incubation*, with certain characters from that game reappearing here. A major power struggle is brewing on the planet Chromos, and you can play either side of the conflict: the Children of Haris sect or the Chromian government. For each side there are 11 missions and a different yarn, of course.

Each side's story is relayed through dull, uninspiring sketch-style cinematics. Even more disappointing is that the units are the same for both sides — they're just a different color. They're not very imaginative, either, consisting mostly of futuristic takes on your basic assortment of contemporary war machines.

Despite all these warning signs, I was having a lot of fun at first. Each side makes its tactical moves on battleground "Battle Islands," working under a time limit. You make your move, then your opponents (AI or human) make theirs, as in *Risk*. The twist is that not only do you need to lead your



troops to victory on the battlefield, but you also have to worry about establishing and maintaining a strong real-time economy that'll keep your army moving.

At first, the economic responsibility at least gives you something to do while you're waiting for your opponent to make his move, but it quickly becomes tedious. Waiting up to eight minutes (depending on the skill level) for your opponent to complete a tactical turn becomes frustratingly boring. Also, because your Economic and Battle Islands are separate from each other, you're required to set up sea routes to keep your troops supplied. This is a much more laborious process than it needs to be.

Next, you have to move each of your units one at a time. (You can group units, but this isn't always efficient.) And each unit can make several moves per turn. This translates into individual missions that can take several hours to complete — not a big problem in single play, but online? No thanks. (Though if you want to play online multiplayer, Blue Byte does offer a matchmaking service.) You're also required to set up power supply lines on your Battle Island, which is basically setting up a series of telephone poles. Again, not a lot of fun.

The game engine does little to speed things up. While capable of rendering some truly spectacular environments and effects, it's slow and a bit unstable — the game occasionally crashed out to my desktop for



The fast Buggy is ideal for hit-and-run attacks.

no apparent reason, forcing a reboot.

It sounded promising, but *The Androsia War* turns out to be more tedious than entertainment. Hardcore strategy fans may be able to overlook the flaws because of the game's depth, but most people will itch for either a true real-time or true turn-based strategy game instead of a haphazard mish-mash of both.

— Steve Klett



The game engine can render some beautiful environments, at a severe performance penalty.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Mix of turn-based and real-time play is cool at first; great environments.

**LOWS:** Tedious gameplay; slow turns; endless missions; slow, somewhat unstable game engine.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A good idea that gets tripped up in boring details.

**PC GAMER** 58%  
MERELY OKAY



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# Call to Power II

**Another Fall of Civilization?**  
Nope. Activision says "Take two" and gets *Call to Power* right on the second attempt.

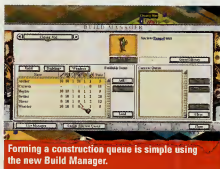
**W**hen *Call to Power* was released last year, it felt so much like an unfinished alpha that some reviewers snidely labeled it *Civilization: Recall for Blunder*. The terrible interface, poor AI, wooden diplomacy, and absurdly overpowered "stealth units" knocked the game immediately out of critical contention.

Back now as *CTP II*, some major work has gone into retuning a variety of features. Sure, we've seen the results before, but this time around, most of it works, and works well.

The game is a turn-based strategy epic similar in many superficial ways to the classic *Civilization*. Beginning at the dawn of human civilization, you have to nurture a culture through its social and technological growing pains, ultimately evolving into a futuristic society capable of space travel.

The interface is the single biggest improvement in this version. The original required far too many clicks to accomplish simple tasks. By contrast, the sequel's management screens (for construction, national policy, trade, and such) are so easy to use that they quickly fade into the background.

Stealth units are still around; devastating attacks are launched sight unseen, but their damage has been muted. A stealth unit can now be seen by any other stealth unit, rather than just the unit type that cancels its attack; and more serious stealth assaults are automatic declarations of war. To top it off, most stealth units have been moved out of the mid-game and into the endgame, where they fit well next to high-powered, futuristic military units.



Forming a construction queue is simple using the new Build Manager.



Some wonders aren't researchable. The first to sail around the world gets a naval movement bonus for 25 turns.

Diplomacy has been greatly expanded. You can make a variety of conditional offers and requests of a rival — control of a city in exchange for a trade treaty, for example. But there's no hint of explanation in the game's deadpan replies of "Your proposal has been accepted/rejected," let alone the broad range of *Alpha Centauri*'s delightfully personalized responses. I've offered a Size 15 city in exchange for an AI player's Size 3 village, only to be turned down (despite lengthy, favorable relations). This requires a bug fix or a gameplay tweak, or more information to tell me what the problem is.

I was also annoyed at the opponent AI's inability to move an exploring combat unit out of my territory once it had agreed to do so. In game after game, these well-armed tourists appeared and forever wandered around my cities. Repeated requests for removal occasioned further words of compliance, and

nothing else. Overall, however, the AI performs competently, developing reasonable goals and mounting balanced attacks. *Call to Power* provided extra citra and construction bonuses on the second, or Easy, level; *CTP II* applies them only when you reach the fourth (Hard) level of playing difficulty.

Of course, no computer opponent in a strategy game can simulate the keen planning and subtle depravity of a human foe, so it's good to know that *CTP II* works well against up to seven opponents through a TCP/IP connection or an IPX LAN.

This sequel still has its share of problems, but this time around they don't outweigh the enjoyment. It still runs a distant second to *Alpha Centauri*, given the latter's uniquely defined enemies and more intense diplomatic activity, but *Call to Power II* is a safe bet for fans of the turn-based civ-building genre.

— Barry Brenesal



The Great Library includes a search function, allowing you to find any game info quickly.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Effective interface; great multiplayer; expanded diplomacy; decent enemy AI.

**LOWS:** Still those dumb stealth units; societies lack individuality; stupid diplomacy swaps.

**BOTTOM LINE:** What the original was intended to be — but still no *Alpha Centauri*.

**PC GAMER** 74%  
GOOD

|                  |                 |                        |   |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | PlayStation     | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PI 333, 48MB RAM, GDI/3D HD                   |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Mission Studios | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PI 400, 128MB RAM, 1.6GB HD, 16MB 3D card     |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Teatsoft        | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 16 (availability only through upstream patch) |

# JetFighter IV

**Sure, simpler flying and knockout graphics have their place. But "relaxed realism" should never mean "less fun."**

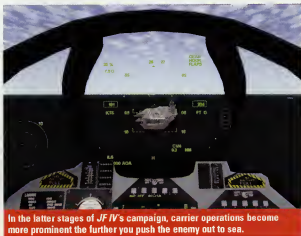
**T**astes great, less filling! With apologies to the Miller Brewing Company, this slogan could also be used to define Mission Studios' long-running series of relaxed-realism *JetFighter* combat flight sims. *JetFighter IV* continues this decade-long tradition by offering a *Buck Rogers*-style combat aviation game in which pyrotechnic eye candy wins out cleanly over Newtonian physics.

Simplified flight models and avionics are expected in a game of this type, but *JF IV* really goes overboard in its attempt to abbreviate and homogenize the experience of modern aerial combat. You can fly an F/A-18 Hornet, F-14 Tomcat or F-22 Lightning, but apart from some obvious physical differences, the three aircraft are almost totally indistinguishable from one another once you

get them airborne. All come equipped with magical 360-degree radar screens that can locate bandits from any direction, and each plane can turn on a proverbial 9G dime when it comes time to perform any Air Combat Maneuvering.

Weapons loadouts have zero effect on aircraft performance, and you can comfortably light up the afterburners without any fuel consumption worries. The minimalist avionics model is similarly dumbed-down.

For what they concede in authenticity, most relaxed-realism sims try to make up for in graphics and "fun factor." *JetFighter IV* does a so-so job with the visuals, but sadly comes up quite short gameplay-wise. Boasting over 40,000 square miles of satellite-generated Northern California terrain (at four times the graphic detail of *JetFighter III*), the game is undeniably attractive, though not to the same jaw-dropping degree as Jane's USAF. Some impressive pyrotechnic effects help raise the ooh and aah factor, but not enough to compensate for the bland



In the latter stages of *JF IV*'s campaign, carrier operations become more prominent the further you push the enemy out to sea.

aircraft textures and repeated instances of terrain draw-through and scenery pop-up.

The hard-scripted campaign structure saddles you with the rather unique task of repelling an attack on California soil by a coalition of Chinese, Russian, and North Korean forces. There are no provisions for accumulated pilot stats, promotions, medals, or even an honorable death — a dreaded "repeat it until you get it right" formula has been employed to advance (or maybe "stall" is a better word) the game's purely linear plot. You can replay or preview each of the 32 campaign missions in Instant Action mode (along with a small selection of Training and Free Flight sorties), and a Mission Generator utility extends the game's rather limited single-player gameplay depth.

It's just as well, since you'll need an upcoming patch to get any multiplayer options — all of them were unceremoniously yanked from the initial release version. Joystick support, too, can be quite spotty: I was forced to retire my Force Feedback 2 stick in favor of a non-FF model just to get a functioning throttle slider. Hardcore sim fans usually dismiss lightweight titles like *JetFighter IV* on general principle, but the absence of any significant gameplay depth, multiplayer options, force-feedback functionality, and comprehensive joystick support should give casual pilots some serious pause as well. While not without its entertaining moments, *JF IV* would get its ass shot off in a dogfight with Jane's USAF.

— Andy Mahood



When an F/A-18 Hornet blows up in this game, it blows up real good.



California skylines replace exotic Third World locales in this game.



An F-14 Tomcat moves into shooting position on a Russian T-160.



Light your afterburners and release the brake key for a CAT launch.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Attractive terrain graphics and weapons pyrotechnics; Mission Generator extends gameplay.

**LOWS:** Coin-op flight modeling/avionics; graphics glitches; scripted campaign lacks immersion.

**BOTTOM LINE:** An *Air Quake* for the masses with no noteworthy features to speak of.

**PC GAMER**

**58%**

MERELY OKAY

- Real Time Space Station Construction

- First Person Combat

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|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>CATEGORY</b> Real-time strategy    | <b>REQUIRED</b> Pentium III, 34MB RAM, 200MB HD, 3D card |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> Blue Tongue Software | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b> Pentium III, 60, 128MB RAM           |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> MosaicPro            | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> 1                                 |

# Starship Troopers

Fans of the movie and novel will like the familiar setting and weapons. But where are the co-ed showers?

What a rocky road to release. Initially, *Starship Troopers* was to be a first- or third-person shooter that would pit you against swarming masses of bugs, just like in the movie. However, it soon became very clear that there was no way any modern computer could put that many arachnids on the screen at once, and after some wrangling, *Starship Troopers* became a 3D real-time strategy game.

You play an officer in the Mobile Infantry, basically the Marines of the 23rd century. You'll be in charge of your very own platoon, selecting which troops to take on missions and what equipment to give them. Once that's all settled, orders arrive via an uninspiring audio briefing and then you're dropped into the combat zone. On the ground, you control your platoon by squads, choose what formations they march in, give out waypoints, call in airstrikes, and even play around with the little mini-nukes that were so cool in the movie.

Fans of the book and the film will be happy to know that the style, weaponry, and technology of the *Starship Troopers* mythos are intact. The power armor suits from the book (but missing from the movie) are here in all their bug-stomping glory. These things make the average grunt more like a walking tank and less like a walking bag of bug food.

All the hardware from the movie is here as well, along with some new additions. You'll have the Morita assault rifle plus an array of energy and heavy weapons that are guaranteed to work better than a giant can of extra-strength Raid.

Among the missions: an invasion of the bugs' homeworld, Klendathu; escort duty for truck convoys through arachnid-infested territory; and defending a fort under siege long enough for the dropships to come and pick you up. You'll face worker bugs, warrior bugs, hopper bugs (the green, flying ones), massive tanker bugs that spew an acidic liquid, the giant bugs that shoot plasma out of their asses, and some brand-new, never-before-seen, er, bugs.



You'll have to call in the big guns to take out some of the larger bugs.



Formations are important to success. Unfortunately, they tend to fall apart quickly.



Keep your troops together: a lone wolf is easy pickings for the Arachnids.

*Starship Troopers* is played with a free-roaming camera in a full 3D world, and this is where the flaws start to show up. The game itself looks terrific — the terrain is detailed, and the bugs look every bit as menacing as they did on the silver screen. But the camera has a very nasty habit of lagging behind your troops. It gets worse as you progress, until the camera is actually centered on a bit of ground that's yards behind your troops. The environment makes matters worse, with very simple mountains and canyons often completely obscuring your view. This frustration can be avoided by hitting a button to reset the camera, but it's evidently a button designed to accommodate crap camera-pathing.

Also, the bugs are just plain dumb. The best way to take them out is to form a gauntlet of troops, and then send one guy out as bait to lure the arachnids into the firing line. This would actually be great if it

worked once or twice, and then the bugs got wise. But the gambit never fails.

The bottom line is that *Starship Troopers*, while pretty, will appeal mostly to diehard fans of the movie — all three of you — and the novel. The gameplay is very straightforward, and if you really want to fight off hordes of aliens in a strategy game, you'll be better satisfied dusting off your copy of *StarCraft*.

—Li C. Kuo

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Very pretty; bugs are hardcore; stays true to *Starship Troopers* lore; nukes.

**LOWS:** Camera is frustrating; AI is easily tricked; troops get lost in the environments.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Mediocre. Fans of the setting may enjoy it, but not too many other folks will.

**PC GAMER** **60%**  
ABOVE AVERAGE

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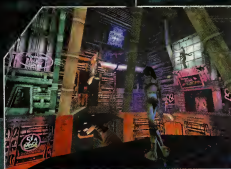
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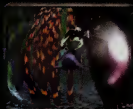
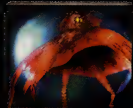
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|                  |                  |                        |  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Action/adventure | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PII 233, 64MB RAM, 152MB HD            |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | The Collective   | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 600MB HD, 3D card |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Simon & Schuster | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 1                                      |

# Star Trek: DS9 — The Fallen

**To misquote the inimitable Mr. T: "Pity the fool Star Trek title released after *Elite Force*."**

**A**t first glance, you might think *The Fallen* is little more than a *Tomb Raider* clone set in the *Star Trek* universe. In some ways, it's exactly that: a third-person action/adventure filled with crevice-jumping and crate-climbing, always on the search for that most elusive of prey, the keycard. There's lava and a snow level, and Worf even sports a most fetching ponytail. It's also a great deal of fun — to a point.

For the uninitiated, *The Fallen* is set two years prior to *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine's* conclusion, and is essentially a prequel to the sixth-season finale. The plot, involving mystical orbs, a Cardassian scientist, and a misguided Bajoran monk, is way too complicated to fully explain here. Suffice it to say that the crew of *DS9* (namely Captain Sisko, Major Kira, and Lt. Commander Worf) must find three missing orbs of the Pah-wraith (the Fallen of the title)...or else.

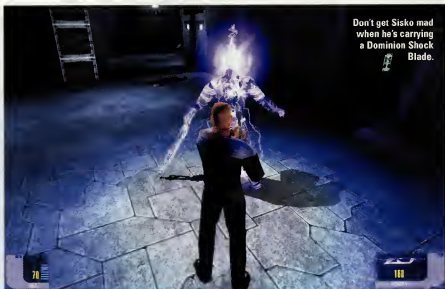
If none of that makes a lick of sense, then most of the game will probably go right over your head. It's not necessary to be a historian of *Trek* lore to finish, but *The Fallen* is



Some of the environments are truly breathtaking.



Shiny floors remind you *Fallen* uses the *UT* engine.



definitely aimed at *DS9* diehards. You play through the game as one of three characters: Sisko, Kira, or Worf. Each has different goals and an exclusive mission or two, but they follow the same storyline. Unfortunately, the potential of seeing the same story from three unique viewpoints is wasted: cut-scenes are mostly the same for each character (only voiceovers change slightly), and your between-mission briefings with the show's familiar faces aboard the station barely differ.

It would've been a far more interesting game if each character tackled a different aspect of the story — say, Sisko searched for orbs while Kira investigated the Pah-wraiths and Worf fought off an alien insurgency — rather than having a three-fold rerurgitation of the same plot.

That's not to say that *The Fallen* isn't worthy of Gene Roddenberry's personal stamp of approval. Some of the puzzles — like changing your phaser modulation to shoot through one force field, ricochet off another, and destroy the first field's generator — are quite clever. Enough stealth and action abound to keep you on your toes, but without any engaging scripted sequences to hold your attention, you're bound to feel most of it is old hat by the third play-through.

Weapons include an assortment of phasers and alien weapons, and your trusty tricorder is useful for identifying enemies, hidden subspace mines, or the contents of nearby containers. A Comm Badge lets you keep tabs on other crewmembers, or beam ammo and first-aid kits to your location. It's this creative implementation of arcane *Trek*-

iness that elevates the game beyond mediocrity, even when the story and design fall short.

As expected, *The Fallen* is served well by the Unreal Tournament engine, but it's never as vibrantly beautiful as the *Quake III*-driven *Elite Force*. The soundtrack is likewise gorgeous, and changes mood depending on the onscreen events. All the show's cast members return to provide character voices except for two, Avery Brooks' Sisko and Colm Meaney's O'Brien. Are they missed? Not really: their soundalike doppelgängers are often more convincing than some of the featured stars.

One final word of advice: the menu implies you should play in the order of Sisko, Kira, and finally Worf. Instead, start with Kira (she's the easier and you'll understand the story better) and then move to Sisko. Unless you're a big Worf fan, skip him entirely — the missions rehash Sisko's, and his use of a Bat'leth melee weapon over a dependable, long-range phaser may work in the *Klingon Empire*, but it just pissed this reviewer off.

— Chuck Osborn

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Faithful level design; great soundtrack; inventive use of the *DS9* license.

**LOWS:** Wasted opportunities; tedium may set in after multi-character novelty wears off.

**BOTTOM LINE:** A must-buy for diehard *DS9* fans (both of you), and a decent game otherwise.

**PC GAMER**  
GOOD

**72%**

|                  |                         |                        |                             |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Action                  | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PII 200, 64MB RAM, 800MB HD |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Human Head              | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PII 300, 128MB RAM          |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Gathering of Developers | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 1                           |

# Blair Witch Volume 2: The Legend of Coffin Rock

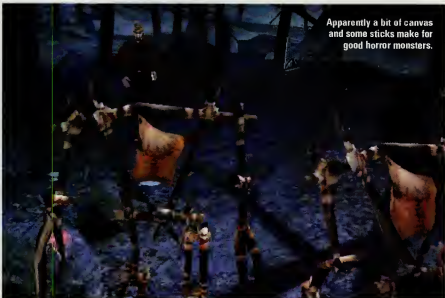
The second *Blair Witch* game will have non-fans standing in a corner, head down, whimpering like a child.

**G**.O.D. apparently has a firm grasp on how fleeting the *Blair Witch* license's propensity for making money is going to be. As such, the publisher's releasing three games in three months, all from different developers. Let's hope they can cash in quick, because the woods have clearly lost their scare.

The first game in the series, *Rustin Parr*, was a mixture of mazes and somewhat aggravating puzzles shoehorned into a pseudo-detective story from the 1940s (and scored 70% in our January issue). *Coffin Rock* is more of an action title crammed into the same adventure engine — and that proves a recipe for disaster.

Set just after the American Civil War, *Coffin Rock* tells the story of a badly wounded and amnesiac lieutenant from the Union army who is found in the woods near the now-infamous town of Burkittsville, Md. When the small girl who found him disappears in those same woods, the protagonist, dubbed Lazarus because of his narrow brush with death, feels that only he can bring her back alive.

The movie tie-in is easily ignored. The five men who will eventually be found ritually bound together on Coffin Rock are the first search party, and while the incident does work itself into Lazarus' story, it's definitely not necessary to have seen the films to under-



Apparently a bit of canvas and some sticks make for good horror monsters.

stand the events here. For fans, however, the expected inside references and random rock piles are littered throughout the game.

Most of what populates *Coffin Rock* are not sacrificial altars or creepy little stacks of stones, but instead a mind-numbingly boring barrage of the same six monsters and half-a-dozen basic backgrounds. Once in the woods, the impressive backdrops that serve to draw you in during the first hour of game-play give way to an unending mass of trees and darkness. Even with the game's brightness at maximum, it still takes a great deal of squinting to notice the ghostly enemies trying to impede Lazarus' quest.

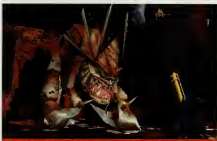
Ghosts in *Coffin Rock* are an easier enemy to dispatch than you might guess, though. Except for their annoying tendency to blend into the background, these dead soldiers and giggling little children don't have any supernatural powers whatsoever. Lazarus never has any trouble blasting them with his revolver or cutting them down with his trusty cavalry saber. The result is a ghost game with no sense of any threat.

The nonsense of creating a pure action game with the Nocturne engine is something else entirely. Great when crafting cinematic moments and realistic clothing, this short game breaks down during the fighting

sequences that fill the majority of its last five hours. There are plenty of times when you'll be backing up to draw a bead on an enemy, and the camera will shift to some shot that doubtless looked breathtaking when storyboarded but which makes the enemy (who is standing less than a foot away) technically invisible, even as it's in the process of killing you.

In addition to the three or four hours of pointless, repetitive combat and the hours of wandering through the woods, *Coffin Rock* offers an ending so clichéd and terrible that it'll make you want to find the writers and tie their eviscerated bodies to Coffin Rock. Let's just hope the third game in the trilogy really is the charm.

— Daniel Erickson



Here's the coolest creature in the entire game. We just saved you five and a half hours of bad gameplay.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Bargain price (\$20); excellent atmosphere; quick load times.

**LOWS:** Repetitive gameplay; troublesome camera; lots of aimless wandering; dumb ending.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Only diehard *Blair Witch* fans are going to want this one, and then only because it's cheap.

**PC GAMER** 48%  
TOLERABLE

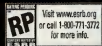
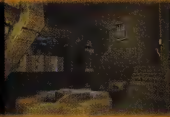
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|                  |           |                        |                                     |
|------------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Action    | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PI 300, 64MB RAM, 200MB HD, 3D card |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | NovaLogic | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | PII 586, 128MB RAM, 500MB HD        |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | NovaLogic | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 16                                  |

# Delta Force: Land Warrior

**"As long as there is terrorism, there will be a need for people who shoot terrorists. People like you."**

It's easy to see the Delta Force series as an overlooked, under-appreciated foot soldier in the tactical/action-game genre. Considered too slow by some and too unrealistic by others, it never achieved the same level of fanboy dedication as *Rainbow Six*. However, it did manage to garner enough of a niche audience to bring about two sequels, the latest of which is *Land Warrior*.

With this third go-round, NovaLogic has certainly upped the quality. They've finally dumped the voxels that were so prominent in the first two games, and moved to a brand-new engine. No more pixel-encrusted landscapes this time around, but the wide-open spaces have been retained in the new technology. This new engine is capable of creating beautiful terrain combined with detailed interiors. You can see a pyramid half a mile away, then actually walk up to it and go inside, to find an environment that's every bit as detailed as the exterior.

Mixing outdoor and indoor locales in a level means that you'll have to equip yourself



Long-range sniping is as fun as ever.



The Stoyr is an accurate, automatic, deadly weapon.



Once you and your AI ally eliminate those terrorists, you'll need to disarm the nuke hidden inside.

accordingly. Thankfully, you can now arm yourself with three weapons — primary, secondary, and sidearm — rather than the usual primary and secondary setup. So, for a sniping/rescue mission, for example, you can take a PSG-1 sniper rifle for the outdoor stuff, a HK UMP for the indoor scuffles, and a sidearm for dire emergencies. The arsenal will make any special forces wannabe drool like Homer Simpson in an all-you-can-eat nacho bar, with hardware ranging from the high-tech HK G11 rifle to the classic AK-47. There's even an underwater rifle for all your submerged assassination needs. And if you ever run out of ammo, no worries — just drop your weapon and pick up one from the hordes of baddies you just mowed down.

Not only have the graphics improved, but the new scenarios are terrific as well. The linear campaign has you jumping around the world from South American towns to terrorist camps in the Middle East, rescuing hostages, disarming nukes, and even assassinating a few ne'er-do-wells for Uncle Sam. (All while repeating the mantra quoted above, no doubt.) You'll wade through foggy swamps searching for an escaped political prisoner, and be supported by Airborne Rangers who'll parachute in halfway through a mission. You'll even be able to use mounted machine guns and anti-aircraft cannons to mow down infantry and blow enemy attack choppers out of the sky.

Cool missions aside, *Land Warrior* does have its hangups. Multiplayer matches on NovaLogic's free NovaWorld service often end up being little more than sniping camps, with few close-quarters encounters. Worse yet, the AI is dumber than dirt. Enemy terrorists will freeze like rabbits under sniper fire, stare blankly at you when you enter a room, and empty their clips into a wall or tree in a futile attempt to hit you. Sometimes, you'll meet one guy with enough brains to actually shoot you, hit you, and kill you, but they're about as common as solar eclipses.

Other than these woes, the game is genuinely fun. The blend of long-range engagements and close-quarter battles is refreshing, and *Land Warrior*'s level design is better than that in most other action games right now.

—Li C. Kuo

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGH:** Terrific new engine; cool missions; great outdoor graphics; plenty of fun.

**LOW:** AI enemies make Dan Quayle look like a quantum physicist; frame rates chug when indoors.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The best in this underrated series, but the gameplay hasn't kept pace with the FPS genre.

**PC GAMER** **78%**  
GOOD

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# Squad Leader

Hasbro has done exactly the sort of hatchet job its worst critics predicted. *Avalon Hill's Squad Leader* is about as attractive as a turd in a swimming pool. And by having the effrontery to attach the Avalon Hill label to this atrocity, Hasbro has crossed the line that separates advertising hyperbole from outright consumer fraud.

They haven't even tried to come up with a fresh approach, as Atomic Games did when it made the first official stab at converting *Advanced Squad Leader* into a PC game, and eventually wound up with *Close Combat*. Instead, they've gussied-up a mediocre and unpopular engine that first crawled into sight in 1996 (in *Wages of War*) and reached its apogee of sophistication in *Soldiers at War* (1998). But while *Soldiers at War* was somewhat fun (in a "dopey, comic book sort of way"), this iteration achieves only one distinction: it's clunkier, dumber, and more alienating, while being more pretentious by several orders of magnitude.

Pathfinding is abysmal. There's no multiplayer mode, not even play-by-email. The layered, cut-away terrain maps make a surreal mockery of anything resembling line-of-sight. The lag between mouse-click and response is often unconscionably long. The soldiers' "character sketches" are so poorly written and punctuated that they seem to have been translated from Japanese. Artillery and satchel-charge explosions look like spells cast by an apprentice wizard in some dungeon-crawl. The animated soldiers move as if broomsticks had been stuck up their asses. And the voice-overs are atrocious! A guy keels over from a fatal headshot and still has time to shout "I'm killed!"? A sniper pauses before popping off a round to snarl, "Here's a bullet for breakfast!"

Why go on? Hasbro has confirmed everyone's worst fears. Incredibly, they've



Pathfinding along any route other than a straight line is problematic.

published a game that will not only antagonize every living fan of *Advanced Squad Leader*, but will baffle and stupefy most newcomers as well. If this is someone's first wargame purchase, it may well be his last.

—William R. Trotter



|           |                     |                 |                                     |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| CATEGORY  | Sports              | REQUIRED        | PII 233, 32MB RAM, 40MB HD, 3D card |
| DEVELOPER | Krome Studios       | WE RECOMMEND    | PII 400, 64MB RAM                   |
| PUBLISHER | Midwest Interactive | MAXIMUM PLAYERS | 4                                   |

# Championship Surfer

Let's hear it for the ocean! Its beauty alone is reason to celebrate, but to hop on a board and ride a wave...that's a ticket to paradise. I suck at surfing, but I love it — and it was my hope to actually realize my thrasher dreams that led me to *Championship Surfer*.

Those hopes looked hopelessly lost at first: the graphics aren't exactly the sweetest. But then I began to explore all the different breaks and conditions. The variations run from small, playful beach breaks

to fast, hollow-point breaks and 25-foot monsters. Weather conditions are important to surfing, and deciding to surf in the sun, rain, or harsh winds adds to the enjoyment of the game. Surfing in a hurricane — with lightning striking all around you — is undeniably thrilling.

The modes are pretty typical of this kind of sports game: you can try your hand (and board) at *Championship*, *Arcade*, *Rumble*, *King of the Waves*, *Trick Attack*, *Free Surf*, and *Time Attack*. I played the *Championship* mode the most because your ride has a more realistic feel, as the surfing tournament complies with official competition scoring and rules. The *Arcade* mode lets you dodge an array of obstacles such as buoys, swimmers, and sharks (or, as the Aussies call them, "men in the gray suits"). In *Rumble* mode, you can assault your opponents with such attack pickups as *Slowdowns*, *Reverses*, and *Nukes*.

The tricks — including fakey airs and tail slides — are similar to skateboarding or snowboarding moves, with the exception of getting barreled (i.e., riding in a tube of



Look at that perfect tube. For some of us, this game's our only chance at getting barreled.

water). They're pretty insane, and realistic, too — if you surf like a freaky superhuman.

In the end, *Championship Surfer* is a good attempt at creating a surfing game, featuring essentially realistic wave behavior and weather conditions. Having some surfing knowledge enhances the experience; but even if the salty monster has never devoured you, there's still a mode for you here somewhere. Whether it's worth the \$20 you'll pay for the experience may be more a matter of your devotion to the waves.

—Joshua Reeves



Just like in a real wipeout, all you see are the board and the poor slob's feet.







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# IT'S HIGH

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# Sacrifice



**When five gods go to war they need powerful wizards to do their dirty work. Welcome to another day at the office.**

**W**hen powered by a PC with sufficient juice, *Sacrifice* is one of those rare titles that lives up to its pre-release potential, and delivers an epic real-time strategy game with a treasure chest of technical baubles. Most encouragingly, it's not coming from expected hotshots Westwood, Blizzard, or Relic.

*Sacrifice* is quite possibly the most beautiful game ever in this genre. Set among vast expanses of rolling hills and valleys carpeted with all sorts of flora and fauna, leaves spiral down from trees and dark rainstorms arrive and depart suddenly, leaving bright rays of sunshine streaming down to earth. Ahhh.

You play a rogue wizard whose homeland has been turned into ashes for reasons unknown. You find yourself the pawn of a party of five gods — Persephone (tree-bugger), Pyro (fire), Stratos (air), Charnel (death), and James (Earth) — each jockeying for supreme control over the land. Instead of engaging in direct combat with one another, they choose powerful wizards as champions to do their dirty work. Initially, each god will offer you tasks, and eventually you'll earn the favor of a particular god (and the wrath of the rest), depending on your choices.



Hey, I thought sacrificing monsters wasn't supposed to be pretty!

Each of the gods has a distinct personality that suits its realm, and they're all a riot to interact with. The free-form way in which you choose your missions and align with particular gods is an extremely refreshing alternative to the structure of most RTS games. It lends the single-player game a high replay level, as the path to the game's conclusion differs based on your choices. There are 46 missions in all, nine for each god and then a "final battle" mission, which is more or less the same for each path.

Mana and souls are the available resources: the former comes from your altar and randomly placed fountains, and the latter are reaped from the bodies of slain soldiers — friend and foe alike. It's actually *exciting* resource management. In most levels you have only a few minutes to create a Manalith (unit factory) and a few creatures before all hell breaks loose. Then it's a frenetic effort to repel attacks by enemy wizards, convert enemy souls while retaining your own, and protect and expand your mana resources.

Most of the creatures are extremely imaginative. They vary from basic melee units to truly awesome flying beasts that can dish out an incredible amount of destruction. My personal favorites are the Manowar, a tall, bipedal unit with a goofy walk and a mean machine gun, and the Bombard, which

hurls flaming boulders like artillery. Each god has 10 unique units in its stable, as well as nine unique spells to cast. Many of the spell effects are visually stunning, particularly the Volcano and Tornado spells.

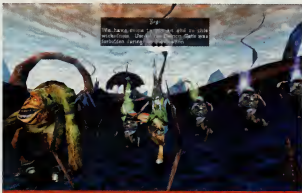
Given all the details to track, the action may be a bit too fast. A few seconds spent fumbling for the proper spell to cast or creature to command can be disastrous. A first-person view option for at least your wizard, as well as the ability to click on a unit on the map and have your view change to its location, would have been very helpful. There's also no difficulty setting — you're stuck with Tough As Hell.

Multiplay (for up to five players) is a blast, with lots of great maps and an extremely intuitive and fun-to-use editor. Gameplay via Interplay's servers is pretty smooth, though not all the maps are balanced fairly for all players.

While a little more polish would have made *Sacrifice* more accessible, it's still an innovative, superior RTS game. It's got a wild, frenetic appeal, and it's exquisite to look at. All music to this RTS fan's ears.

— Steve Kleit

|                  |                    |                        |   |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>CATEGORY</b>  | Real-time strategy | <b>REQUIRED</b>        | PII 300, 64MB RAM, 50MB HD, 3D card     |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> | Interplay          | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b>    | Fastest, most setup-up machine possible |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> | Interplay          | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> | 5                                       |



I dare you to say you've seen units like these before in an RTS game!



That's one big, angry bug! Where's the Black Flag spell?



Controlling all your creatures in moments like this can be tricky.

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Amazing graphics; fast action; blackly comic story; well-balanced units; tons of atmosphere.

**LOWS:** Control and view difficulties; some unbalanced multiplayer maps.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The best fully-3D real-time strategy game yet.

**PC GAMER** **90%**  
EDITORS' CHOICE

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GAMER**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>CATEGORY</b> Adventure | <b>REQUIRED</b> PIII, 32MB RAM, 30MB HD                |
| <b>DEVELOPER</b> Funcom   | <b>WE RECOMMEND</b> PII 266, 64MB RAM, 2GB HD, 3D card |
| <b>PUBLISHER</b> Funcom   | <b>MAXIMUM PLAYERS</b> 1                               |



# The Longest Journey

**There's no giving this adventure game enough credit: it's just plain fantastic. Who knew?**

**A**dventure gaming is officially dead. That's what everyone, their mother, and their mother's mother would have us believe. Owners of Funcom's newly released epic masterwork *The Longest Journey* know the truth, however: the naysayers are off their collective rocker.

Put simply, this game's pure addictiveness is enlightening. That's because it's neither a groundbreaking advancement nor a technological marvel — just a clever and enchanting refinement of time-honored concepts. On the surface level, it's a grandiose game, resplendent in its high-res glory. Delving into its magical story, however, reveals much more than can be read into mere pixels.

Writer Ragnar Tornquist has produced nothing short of a magnum opus. As April Ryan, 23rd-century college student, you're charged with saving the cosmos (so much for four years of keg parties and — ahem — social experimentation). The fragile balance that separates the realms of magic and science is steadily crumbling, in ways that draw April into a huge adventure. Although a one-paragraph summary can't do the tale justice, suffice it to say that the plot is more mature and riveting than almost anything that's come before in this genre. Sporting a sophisticated sci-fi story of this magnitude, the product emphatically evokes thoughts of the phrase, "Anyone played a good book lately?"

Novels don't boast a presentation this sexy, though. Rendered scenes of fantastic constructs and technological marvels provide the backdrop upon which 3D-accelerated characters come alive. A slick interface



Items with items, clues within clues...Time to think!



Beneath these stunning visuals is a wickedly good story that'll draw you in.



Not every character stays on the heroine's good side.



Excuse me — are those Bugle Boy jeans?

packed with little animated bells and whistles also accentuates the high production values. Conversations with a rich selection of fleshed-out NPCs are astoundingly enjoyable as well, due in no small part to the fabulous voiceovers and mood music. The main character dispenses cynical wit and wisdom when called for. Frankly, Funcom has crafted a cinematic tour de force in this PC game.

It's fitting, then, that such a classy game touts equally fabulous puzzles. Item collection and integration command the majority of your attention. Contraption repair sessions are also on the menu, but the mindbenders can be solved logically. Branching dialogue, subtle hints, intuition, and first-person glimpses guide you guilelessly through the plot.

Though it takes time to noodle them out, several sly aides make your life easier. Highlighted cursors confirm the validity of your guesses. A running diary tracks your progress and important information you've gleaned. You won't ever feel like your hand is being held, but you're definitely getting the subtle leg up that can separate fun from frustration.

Bearing in mind that the title's been out in Europe for over a year, American publishers should be ashamed of their treatment of this genre. This Norwegian import betters 99 percent of the market's "typical" adventure games, what precious few there are. Now that Funcom's baby has arrived, load it up and dive once more into the joys of a brilliantly constructed adventure game. And god help anyone that tries to peel you away from the keyboard.

— Scott Steinberg

## FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS:** Mature and magical storytelling; sumptuous graphics; logical, rewarding puzzles.

**LOWES:** It may be a bit too edgy in parts for younger audiences.

**BOTTOM LINE:** The pinnacle of classic, point-and-click adventure gaming.

**PC GAMER** 90%  
EDITOR'S CHOICE

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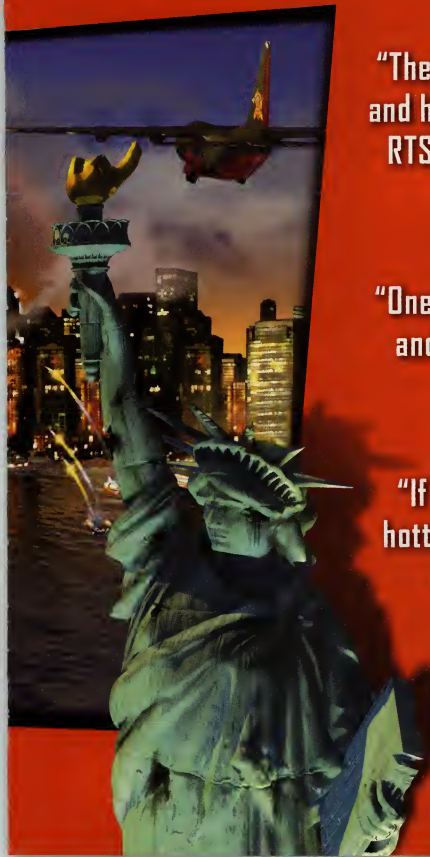
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# NEWS...



**"9.3 out of 10"**

**"Go buy the game."**

**- IGN.com**

**"The most visceral, thrilling and heart-pounding intense RTS experience ever seen on the PC."**

**- AVault.com**

**"One of the most enthralling and addictive RTS games we've played."**

**- CNET Gamecenter**

**"If you're looking for the hottest RTS this year, your ship has come in."**

**- Gamers Depot**

**"Westwoods finest game to date."**

**- PC Zone (UK)**

# "Conquest is easy. Control is not."

— James T. Kirk, stardate unknown

## Your private little war is over.

It's a boundless galaxy where players from across the globe struggle for control, one sector at a time. A continuous online matching system reflects the current state of the campaign as 8 races battle for dominance. Choose your species, choose your ships, and choose your friends wisely!

- A vast single player campaign with 75 missions to explore.
- Starships come to life with real-time damage texturing and dynamic lighting from weapons, explosions and stars.
- 8 Empires are yours to command or oppose with over 1,000 controllable ships including new fighters, escorts, patrol ships, carriers and returning favorites like the Federation Heavy Cruiser.
- 2 new races with horrifying new weapons: The Mirak Star League and their devastating missile technology and the mysterious forces of the Interstellar Concordium.



Animated Violence

[www.interplay.com/sfc2](http://www.interplay.com/sfc2) • [www.startrek.com](http://www.startrek.com)

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# HARDSTUFF

THE ULTIMATE MONTHLY GUIDE TO GAMING GEAR

## HSREVIEWS

**GLADIAC ULTRA** ..... PAGE 104

The box says it uses the world's fastest DDR memory. What does that mean for performance?

**PROMEDIA 2.1** ..... PAGE 105

Four satellite speakers and a subwoofer too much for you to handle? Perhaps you'll be more content with Klipsch's new two-speaker solution.

**AV-1957F 19" MONITOR** ..... PAGE 105

Korean Digital Systems delivers its best monitor to date.

**FIRESTORM DUAL POWER GAMEPAD** ..... PAGE 110

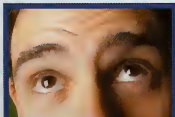
Can ThrustMaster still compete in the crowded gamepad market?

**WINGMAN STRIKE FORCE 3D** ..... PAGE 110

A new high-end force-feedback stick from Logitech, the designers of the best feedback stick ever produced.

## HSTECHQ&A

A month without Dear Greg...how will any of you survive? ..... PAGE 108



**What do you call 100 rabbits walking backward?**

My hairline has definitely taken a few steps back since I was in high school and I shed like a yeti all day long. I've been complaining to my father about it for years, but because he's just about totally bald, the fact that I have any hair on my head makes him think I'm overreacting. He says that my hairline is simply "maturing." What the hell is that? Am I supposed to wait until it matures all the way off my head before getting upset?

Even though he's a doctor and I've asked him repeatedly to prescribe Propecia for me (that's the pill that grows hair and/or allows you to keep the hair you've got), he won't do it. I'm starting to think he just wants to keep me down because he's bitter about his own baldness — I mean, he tried slathering Rogaine on his head a few years back, so why shouldn't I be allowed to give this new drug a try, right?

That's why I went to my own doctor and had him prescribe it for me behind my father's back. Sure, I had to argue with the guy to get him to believe that I was actually losing my hair (he also tried to pull that "maturing" crap on me), but after I whined for a good 20 minutes he came around.

So far, none of the nastier "sexual" side effects have plagued me [Not that he's had a chance to find out in company other than his own... —Ed.], but my hairline is still farther back than I'd like it to be and I continue to shed like a cheap fur coat. The good news is that, since Propecia was originally developed for older men as a way to ward off prostate cancer, I should be able to steer clear of that calamity even if I end up going totally bald and impotent as a result of my narcissism.

Greg Vederman, Senior Associate Editor



## HSTRINITY

### Welcome to a BRAVE NEW WORLD

So you want to build a new PC, huh? As you may know, it can be a tricky affair. Luckily, Hard Stuff editor Greg Vederman is here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below reflect the lowest prices we could find as we went to press (obtained almost entirely from [www.pricevatch.com](http://www.pricevatch.com)).

| ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM<br>PRICE: ROUGHLY \$400   | MID-RANGE SYSTEM<br>PRICE: ROUGHLY \$1,000                   | DREAM SYSTEM<br>PRICE: \$2,000 AND ABOVE                               |
|--|--|--|
| CASE: 300-watt ATX form factor ..... \$100   | CASE: 300-watt ATX form factor ..... \$100                   | CASE: 300-watt ATX form factor ..... \$100                             |
| PROCESSOR: Intel Celeron 700MHz ..... \$79   | PROCESSOR: AMD Thunderbird 900MHz ..... \$163                | PROCESSOR: Intel PIV 1.5GHz ..... \$121                                |
| MOTHERBOARD: Gigabyte GA-6VXT-4X PPGA ..... \$79                                   | MOTHERBOARD: Asus KT7 ..... \$130                            | MOTHERBOARD: Intel i85-based chipset ..... \$250                       |
| MEMORY: 128MB PC-133 SDRAM ..... \$79  | MEMORY: 256MB PC-133 SDRAM ..... \$99                        | MEMORY: 256MB PC80 RDRAM ..... \$300                                   |
| CD-ROM/DVD-RDM: Hi-Nec 6x Pioneer DVD-RDM drive w/softwars DVD decoding ..... \$99 | CD-ROM/DVD-RDM: Creative Labs Encore 6x with 0x3 ..... \$200 | CD-ROM/DVD-RDM: Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM drive w/softwars ..... \$100       |
| FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB ..... \$8  | FLOPPY DRIVE: Samsung 3.5" 1.44MB ..... \$8                  | DVD DECODER: RealMagic Hollywood Plus PCI card ..... \$50              |
| HARD DRIVE: 20.4GB Oskaster 40GB ..... \$97  | HARD DRIVE: 30.0GB IBM Oskaster 40GB ..... \$130             | BURNER: Flexstor 12x16x32x CO-RW ..... \$226                           |
| SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! Value ..... \$36                                 | SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+ ..... \$69            | HARD DRIVE: 81.9GB DiamondMax Proxima 98190H ..... \$310               |
| MODEM: 3COM #2576 56K v.90 Hardware Modem ..... \$60                               | MODEM: 3COM #2576 56K v.90 Hardware Modem ..... \$60         | SOUND CARD: Creative Labs SBLive! MP3+ ..... \$69                      |
| MONITOR: 17" OptiqueQ D71 ..... \$170  | MONITOR: 19" OptiqueQ D05 ..... \$229                        | MODEM: 3COM #2576 56K v.90 hardware modem ..... \$60                   |
| VIDEO CARD: GeForce2 MX ..... \$100  | VIDEO CARD: 32MB GeForce2 GTS ..... \$200                    | MONITOR: 19" OptiqueQ D05 ..... \$200                                  |
| JOYSTICK: Logitech WingMan Digital ..... \$17                                      | JOYSTICK: Microsoft SideWinder Precision Pro ..... \$53      | VIDEO CARD: NVIDIA GeForce2 Ultra ..... \$499                          |
| GAMEPAD: Microsoft SideWinder Gamepad ..... \$23                                   | GAMEPAD: Microsoft SideWinder Gamepad ..... \$23             | JOYSTICK: Saitek X36 Flight Control System (USB) ..... \$96            |
| SPEAKERS: Labtech LCS-2414 ..... \$35  | SPEAKERS: Cambridge SoundWorks FPS 1000 ..... \$70           | GAMEPAD: MS SideWinder Gamepad ..... \$23                              |
| KEYBOARD: Adronics ..... \$15  | KEYBOARD: Adronics ..... \$15                                | SPEAKERS: Klipsch ProMedia v.2-400 ..... \$249                         |
| USB MOUSE: Logitech or Microsoft ..... \$39  | USB MOUSE: Logitech or Microsoft ..... \$39                  | KEYBOARD: MS Natural Keyboard Pro ..... \$75                           |
| TOTAL ..... \$1,040  | TOTAL ..... \$1,058  | USB MOUSE: Original IntelliMouse with IntelliEye technology ..... \$35 |
|  |  | TOTAL ..... \$2,075  |

■ ELSA

## GLADIAC ULTRA

**Sure, "Gladiac Ultra" is kind of a silly name, but once you see this card running, you'll be too awestruck to laugh.**

### COMPANY

Elsa  
www.elsa.com

### PRICE

\$649 (U.S. \$71)

Just like the good of 3dfx Voodoo II, once you've seen one GeForce2 Ultra, you've pretty much seen 'em all. Specifications on many graphic chips and technologies are loose enough that individual board makers have some room to revise and tweak here and there to personalize their cards. Not in this case, however: NVIDIA's reference design keeps its components in a state of delicate balance, and as a result, all retail GeForce2 Ultra cards are pretty much created equal, at least in terms of hardware.

And what does this hardware do (just in case you've been living under a rock, or inside our scary-smelling mini-refrigerator)? Well, the Gladiac Ultra is the world's bestest, fastest 3D video card—right along with all of the other GeForce2 Ultras we've tested thus far. NVIDIA's design philosophy has been pretty straightforward over the past couple of years: release a new core technology at the start of the year and then shrink it

down and speed it up six months later and tack on a name like "Ultra." Right now, we're basically in one of those "shrink" and "speed" periods. The Ultra, for all intents and purposes, is basically just

a faster version of the GeForce2 GTS. The core speed of the Ultra on the Gladiac is a blisteringly zippy 250MHz, and its 64MB of DDR memory clocks in at 230MHz (effectively 460MHz).

Don't worry too much about what these big numbers mean exactly, as long as you understand that there isn't anything else available right now that can come close to touching these performance levels.

Mom put it best when she said, "Son, sleep well knowing that, should you buy a Gladiac Ultra, you'll be able to push an astounding 31,000,000 polygons per second even if you don't have any idea what polygons are." Word-up, mom.

Just because Elsa couldn't mess too much with the board design laid out by NVIDIA doesn't mean it couldn't add some cool features to the package. Take, for example, the inclusion of its own 3D Revelator lenses. The Revelator's LCD shutter lenses flicker in time to doubled onscreen images and create the illusion of 3D—and pretty damn well, too. They make it look like you're playing your games inside and outside of your monitor instead of on it. They'll work with just about any D3D or OpenGL game currently available, and though they did cause some eyes to water over here at PC Gamer, the general consensus after we gave them another whirl (they've

been on the market for a while now) was that they're as cool as ever.

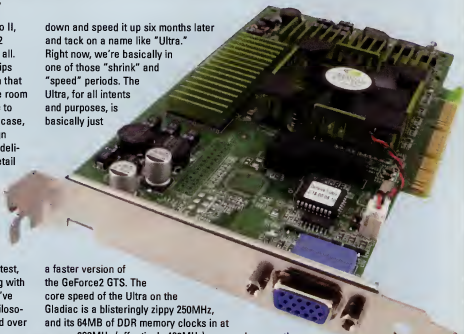
It should almost go without saying that a card like this requires some serious CPU horsepower to back it up, but you'd be amazed how many emails we get from people asking us why their new video card isn't playing their games as fast as they were expecting it to. Such letters are usually followed up with comments like, "Did I mention that I'm running on a 450MHz PIII?" If you want to get the most out of the Gladiac Ultra, don't pair it with anything slower than a 600MHz processor. (And let's be honest here: if you can afford to buy this video card, you can afford to upgrade your CPU.) We tested this card on a 1GHz Athlon system, and you shouldn't expect to see numbers as high as ours unless you're also running a CPU in this range.

### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS** GeForce2 Ultra; 64MB DDR RAM; includes 3D Revelator glasses.

**LOWS** As with all GeForce2 Ultras, this new Gladiac isn't cheap—and there's no retail version without the 3D Revelator.

**BOTTOM LINE** If you can afford it and you've got a fast enough CPU, run, don't walk, to your nearest computer store and pick up a Gladiac Ultra.



### BENCHMARKS

#### 3DMARK 2000

(D3D test—all tests run in 32-bit color with 24-bit Z and triple buffer)

• 800x600

3DMark: 7,095

• Game 1: Helicopter

Low Detail: 141.4 fps

Med Detail: 106.4 fps

High Detail: 82.0 fps

• Game 2: Adventure

Low Detail: 158.9 fps

Med Detail: 77.2 fps

High Detail: 46.1 fps

• Fill Rate: 780.5 MegaTexels per second

3DMark: 5,190

• Game 1: Helicopter

Low Detail: 130.8 fps

Med Detail: 92.0 fps

High Detail: 45.0 fps

• Game 2: Adventure

Low Detail: 113.5 fps

Med Detail: 74.8 fps

High Detail: 44.4 fps

• Fill Rate: 756.0 MegaTexels per second

#### QUAKE III

640x480: 111.5 fps

800x600: 110.9 fps

1024x768: 100.2 fps

1280x1024: 74.9 fps

1600x1200: 50.4 fps

#### MDK2

800x600: 126.0 fps

1024x768: 119.0 fps

1280x1024: 84.3 fps

1600x1200: 56.7 fps

## ■ KDS

### AV-195TF

#### COMPANY

KDS  
www.kdsusa.com

#### PRICE

\$499 (M.S.R.P.)

#### SPECS

**MAXIMUM RESOLUTION**  
1600 x 1200 at 65Hz

**APERTURE GRILLE**  
24mm

**DIMENSIONS**  
[W x H x D] 18.9 x 18.3 x 18.0 inches

#### USER CONTROLS

Power Switch, Contrast, Brightness, Horizontal size/position, Vertical size/position, color temperature (5300/5500/5500) RGB drive, Side pinchoff, Remote V-C control, Trapezoid, pinchoff balance, corner pinchoff balance (top and bottom), V dynamic convergence (top, center and bottom) raster rotation, parallelogram, Imageon, Imageos, OSD Position H/V, recall

**B**oasting a flat-screen FD Trinitron tube (Sony), this 19-inch monitor seems much larger than the curved 19-inch Optique V95 that usually calls my desk its home. The fact that this KDS is totally flat means that you're getting a larger viewable screen — a full 18.1-inch — and it also means, along with the anti-reflective coating, that glare is much less of an issue than with standard monitors.

Something you always want to be on the lookout for with large monitors — especially flat screens — is balanced geometry. Sometimes screen edges won't line up no matter how much you fiddle with the onscreen controls. Thankfully, this wasn't a problem with our 195TF: as soon as we plugged it in and it was recognized, everything lined up beautifully. Colors were vibrant as well, and the screen's 24mm aperture grille meant that text in the middle of the screen was super-sharp at most resolutions.

The bad news is that, toward the edges of the screen, text and images start to get a little blurry. Additionally, text at resolutions of 1280 x 1024 and above tended to be

slightly blurry throughout the entire screen. Because fine detail isn't as noticeable in games, the fuzziness didn't detract from the experience at all when it was displaying moving graphics. Quite to the contrary, all the games we played looked exceptionally crisp.

Brightness, like so many things when it comes to monitors, is subjective, but we found the KDS to be too dim even with the contrast maxed all the way out and the brightness set to around 70 (out of 100). Even though, technically, Trinitron monitors are supposed to be brighter than standard CRTs, we've generally found the reverse to be the case. If you're used to working on Trinitrons then this monitor's brightness should be what you'd expect, but those moving from anything else could be in for a surprise.

At \$499, the AV-195TF is a perfectly acceptable monitor. There are plenty of worse models on the market, but there are also better, less expensive choices, too. If you can find this monitor for around \$75 less than the M.S.R.P., it's a great



deal. Otherwise, if you're looking for a flat-screen monitor in this price range, go with the ViewSonic PF790 instead.

#### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS** Flat screen; vibrant colors;

easy-to-navigate onscreen menus.

**LOWS** Blurry edges; text gets fuzzy at

resolutions of 1280 x 1024 and higher.

**BOTTOM LINE** The AV-195TF is the

best monitor we've seen yet from KDS.

If you can find one for a great price (\$75

less than M.S.R.P., for example), it's a

very capable monitor.

## ■ KLIPSCH

### PROMEDIA 2.1

#### COMPANY

Klipsch  
1-888-954-5685  
www.klipsch.com

#### PRICE

\$199.99 (Direct)

**Y**ou've watched from afar as one friend after another has plunked down the \$249 necessary to purchase Klipsch's THX-certified v.2-400 4.1 speakers — arguably the best computer speakers on the planet. And while you've always wanted a set of your own, you simply haven't had room for rear speakers anywhere on or around your cramped desk. Why spend all that money on some-

thing you can only half use, right? Friends, your troubles may well be over, because Klipsch has just released ProMedia 2.1 — the world's first and only THX-certified 2.1 PC speakers.

As you'd probably imagine, these speakers are everything the 4.1s are — only without the rear speakers for surround sound. And while the wattage has been halved from 400 watts to 200 watts, volume, crisp sound, and the most amazing bass you've ever heard are not issues here. The power breaks down like this: each of the two satellites pumps 35

watts while the sub thumps away with 130 watts all its own. Like its big brother, these speakers will peel the paint off the walls: at 106db, they're just about as loud as being at a rock concert (if you're crazy enough to crank them up that high, that is). All the controls for the speakers are found on the primary satellite speaker, and

everything here is pretty straightforward: you've got a volume knob, a bass knob, and, thank the lord, a headphone jack right on the side for those times when waking the neighbors again with your loud games may lead to jail time.

There's only one catch, kids, and it's the price. The 2.1s are only \$50 less than the 4.1s. For that sort of money, you might be better off trying to make room for the rear speakers — even if it involves throwing away your car. It's for this very reason that we can't give the 2.1s an Editors' Choice award: not because they aren't excellent, but because we just can't recommend them over the v.2-400s at this price.

#### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS** Truly amazing sound quality;

earth-rattling bass; headphone jack.

**LOWS** Only \$50 less than Klipsch's

own v.2-400s.

**BOTTOM LINE** If these speakers

were \$50 cheaper, they'd get an Editors'

Choice rating. As is, for this much money,

it'd almost be silly to not go for the

v.2-400s instead.







# "Area51 runs crop circles around the competition"

-PC Gamer January 2001



## GREY

AMD Duron™ 750MHz Processor  
High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System  
VIA KT133 Chipset Motherboard  
128MB SDRAM (PC-133)  
Floppy Drive 1.44MB  
20GB 7200RPM Hard Drive Ultra ATA100  
NVIDIA GeForce2 GTS™ 32 MB DDR Video Card  
SoundBlaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card  
Cambridge Four Point Surround FPS1500  
Subwoofer & Speaker System  
56X EIDE CD-ROM Player  
White Hydraulic ATX Mid-Tower Case 300 Watt PS  
Microsoft Internet Keyboard  
Microsoft Intellimouse  
U.S. Robotics V90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem  
Microsoft Windows Millennium OS  
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with Alienware On-Site Home Service  
Personalized Technical Support Manual  
Optimized & Configured for High-Performance  
FREE FUNC Technical Surface Pad

**\$1,299.00**

Financing as low as \$35/MO., 48 MOS.

## AREA51: AURORA

AMD Thunderbird™ 1.2GHz Processor  
High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System  
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Virtual Channel 256MB SDRAM (PC-133)  
Black Floppy Drive 1.44MB  
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Koolmaxx Video Cooling System  
SoundBlaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card  
Klipsch 4.1 ProMedia v2 4.0 THX 400-Watt  
Subwoofer & Speaker System  
Pioneer 16X/40X DVD Player  
Black Hydraulic ATX Mid-Tower Case 300 Watt PS  
Black 107-Enhanced Keyboard  
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FREE FUNC Technical Surface Pad

**\$2,299.00**

Financing as low as \$65/MO., 48 MOS.

## AREA51

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.5 GHz  
High-Performance Heatsink/Cooling System  
Intel® 850 Chipset Motherboard w/5 PCI  
128MB RDRAM (PC-800)  
Black Floppy Drive 1.44MB  
40GB 7200 RPM Hard Drive Ultra ATA100  
NVIDIA GeForce2 Ultra™ 64MB DDR Video TV-Out  
Koolmaxx Video Cooling System  
SoundBlaster LIVE! 3D Sound Card  
Klipsch 4.1 ProMedia v2 4.0 THX 400-Watt  
Subwoofer & Speaker System  
Pioneer 16X/40X DVD Player  
Piecewriter 12X/10X/32X CDR-W IDE  
Black Hydraulic ATX Mid-Tower Case 300 Watt PS  
Black 107-Enhanced Keyboard  
Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer  
U.S. Robotics V90 56K Voice/Fax/Modem  
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Optimized & Configured for High-Performance  
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Financing: \$90/MO., 48 MOS.

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# ALIENWARE.COM

## Gasps! A month without Dear Greg. Deal with it!



NVIDIA will be releasing NV20 soon enough, but that doesn't mean NV15 will suddenly be slow.

**Q** The flippant tone in your recent review of the GeForce2 Ultra made me think, "Great, here's another video card that will be outdated by the time I can save enough money to buy it." However, upon looking through the issue again, I finally took a good hard look at the benchmarks. Holy shit, Vederman! My 16MB TNT has a serious inferiority complex! Outdated in four months? Who cares! 100.4fps (frames per second) which everything maxed at 1024 x 768 in *Quake III*? An incredibly playable 50fps at 1600 x 1200? The NV20 may end up being one hell of a graphics card when it finally sees the light of day, but meanwhile, I'll take an Ultra (NV15), please, with a side of french fries.

—David Stone, via email

**A** I think you've got me all wrong, Dave. My "flippant" tone had everything to do with the fact that these cards are getting faster and faster on a near-daily basis and that raw speed, while nice, is getting a bit boring. Let's see some really hot new features that make games look better, you know? That said, you're absolutely correct. If you save your money for several months and then buy an Ultra, you'll be happy as a pig in poop for quite a while.

**Q** My computer locks up whenever I play any games that require a 3D accelerator. My configuration: AMD Thunderbird 850MHz, 128MB PC-133 RAM, Asus ATX motherboard, Jaton 32MB GeForce, and a Creative sound card. Is there a way to fix the problem or do I have to get another video card or motherboard?

—Curtiss Michels, via email

**A** Here's some things you'll want to try, Curtiss: make sure to install the latest BIOS upgrade for your motherboard; grab the Detonator 3 drivers for your video card at [www.nvidia.com](http://www.nvidia.com) and use those instead of the ones from Jaton; check with your video-card manufacturer to see if they've released any BIOS updates for their card and install them if they have; if all else fails, try going into your BIOS and setting your AGP slot down from 4X to 1X and see if the lockups go away.

**Q** I think I have a joystick curse. I've had half a dozen joysticks, all from reputable manufacturers such as CH, Logitech, and Saitek, and every one of the damn things has crapped out in less than a year. The electronics just seem to go

bad and they start doing strange things like making my spaceship go suddenly flying off in one direction or fire unexpectedly. My latest stick (a Saitek Cyborg 3D Gold USB) has an intermittent connection in every one of its buttons. It's especially strange considering that I'm an FPS fanatic so I don't even use a joystick that much. I don't abuse my sticks. What the heck could be the problem here? Could there be something wrong with my system? Or are joysticks just crap these days? Could you recommend a reliable, non-force-feedback joystick that won't break the bank? I don't feel like spending \$80 on something that's just going to spontaneously combust on me.

—Name withheld, via email

**A** I don't think there's a problem with your system, but it is a possibility. If you've had a USB mouse installed for a while and it still works, then perhaps you've just run into some really bad luck with your joysticks. Have you opened any umbrellas in the house lately or walked under any ladders? See if you can't find a Microsoft Precision Pro (they're not being made any more, but they're still around) or, if not, a Precision 2. With a little bit of luck (you're due for some), you'll find either of them for \$50 or less.

**Q** I just read the review of the Alienware Pentium 4 system in your Jan. 2001 issue, and given that I've wanted an Alienware system since I first saw their ads, I decided to look into buying one. I started by scouring the Net looking for additional information on the Pentium 4 and saw that, apparently, the P4 has a weak floating-point unit (whatever that is), so in some cases it doesn't perform as well as it could.

I don't want to be in the position of plopping down a huge chunk of change for a 1.2GHz Athlon system and then a week later AMD releases the

### NEED HELP?

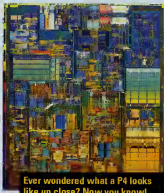
If you have a hardware question or comment, or a personal problem, write to:

Greg Vederman  
Hard Stuff, PC Gamer  
150 North Hill Drive  
Brisbane, CA 94005  
or email:  
[gvederman@pcgamer.com](mailto:gvederman@pcgamer.com)

new P4-killer. Do you think I should I go with a maxed-out Athlon Thunderbird system, wait for the next AMD chip, or go with the P4?

—Mike Scott, via email

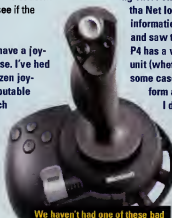
**A** You bastard. You had to go and ask me a direct question about which technology I like better, didn't you? Well, since you asked, if I were going to buy a new system of my own in the



Ever wondered what a P4 looks like up close? Now you know!

next month or two, I'd almost certainly go with a super-fast Thunderbird, along with a motherboard that supports DDR SDRAM memory. I haven't played with enough DDR-equipped motherboards yet to say which one I like best, but the speed increase over SDR is quite noticeable in a lot of applications. P4 still looks great, but for now, I'm sticking with AMD's court. As for upcoming AMD technologies, Sledgehammer is likely to replace the Athlon at some point in the semi-near future, but still, if I were planning to build a new gaming system in the next month or so, I'd stick with the Thunderbird.

**Q** I'm thinking of buying a new computer. I have to decide between



We haven't had one of these bad boys break on us yet. Then again, we've hardly broken any others.

Hypersonic, Alienware, and Falcon Northwest. Which one would you choose for a good semi-cheap machine? I'm also thinking of buying some Cambridge SoundWorks FPS 2000 digital speakers and a Sound Blaster Live! Is it possible to connect the speakers to my computer as well as the TV for watching movies and DVDs?

—Stanislaw Chajewski, via email

**A** I'd go with any and all of the companies you listed; all three have great track records and all build top-notch gaming systems. The deciding factor for me would be price. Whichever one can build the system you want for the least amount of money is your best bet. To answer your other question, no, those speakers aren't really made to function with your TV or DVD player. If you want a set of speakers to do double duty, you'll want to go with something like the PlayWorks DTT2500 (or 3500) Digital instead (<http://csw.creative.com/products/pwdtt2500>).

**Q** I am having a slight problem with a home-built system. The system works fine

— when it starts. But it seems that the longer I have the computer running, the more time is required for it to "rest" between shut-down and start-up or else it's prone to locking up. I thought that the problem might be an internal heat issue, but the computer has a case fan in addition to the power-supply fan and the fan/heatinks on the CPU and GeForce2. The

fan/heatinks on the CPU isn't the one that is boxed with the retail CPU, but I didn't think that that would matter. While this is not a fatal problem, it is very annoying, so I will gladly accept any of your advice on the matter.

—Jerome Weagley, via email

**A** Make sure that the heatinks on your CPU is attached properly. Sometimes, if enough contact isn't being made between the CPU and the heat plate or thermal grease, heat won't be dissipated properly. In situations like this, your heatinks and fan can actually trap heat by mistake — like a hat on your head. You should be able to buy thermal grease/compound at any computer store. You'll want to use a very small amount as described in the instructions.

**Q** I've been hearing a lot of things lately about 3dfx. One story I read said that the Voodoo5 6000 would no longer be coming out. The other said that 3dfx was getting out of the 3D card business altogether. Is 3dfx going out of business or something? Please let me what's going on.

—Ted Chapman, via email

**A** Yes, no, and maybe, in that order. Yes, the Voodoo5 6000 has been canceled. Quantum3D will still be using the technology for arcade systems and the like, but a retail product isn't expected to see the light of day. As for the other rumor, 3dfx is looking to sell off the fabrication plant it acquired when it purchased STB not all that long ago, but it will still be designing and selling its own 3dfx-branded video cards — said cards will then be built in someone else's factory. Whether or not 3dfx will end up going under is anyone's guess at this point. Ted. Things certainly don't look too good. Hopefully, whatever new technology the company has up its sleeve will end up pulling it out of the flames.



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Klipsch ProMedia v2-400—\$249

## LOGITECH

# WINGMAN STRIKE FORCE 3D

### COMPANY

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www.logitech.com

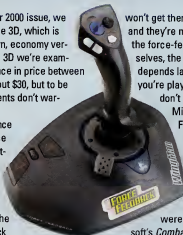
### PRICE

\$89 (M.S.R.P.)

**B**ack in our October 2000 issue, we reviewed the Force 3D, which is basically a scaled-down, economy version of the Strike Force 3D we're examining here. The difference in price between the two joysticks is about \$30, but to be honest, the enhancements don't warrant the extra cash.

The first big difference between the Strike Force and its less expensive little brother is a considerably larger base that adds a great deal of stability—something that's sorely lacking in the little guy. Force-feedback effects seem a bit stronger this time out, too. The unit still seems a bit too light overall, however, and is still prone to coming away from the desk in heated dogfights.

The Strike Force has seven programmable buttons, and they're arranged much better than they are on the Force 3D: you



won't get them mixed up as easily and they're more accessible. As for the force-feedback features themselves, the quality of the effects depends largely on the games you're playing, but overall they don't feel as good as those in

Microsoft's latest Force Feedback 2. (And neither the Strike Force nor the FF2 feels close to as good as the original, now-discontinued Logitech WingMan Force.) The effects were inconsistent in Microsoft's *Combat Flight Simulator 2*, but were much more convincing in the special version of *FreeSpace 2* that comes packaged along with the unit.

As cool-looking as the Strike Force 3D is, when you're talking about spending around \$100, the Force Feedback 2 is a better deal—but even so, we're left

wanting more. The sad truth is that, instead of getting better over time, force-feedback technology has really begun to stagnate. Both Microsoft's and Logitech's first efforts were better than anything currently available. They were big and ugly, but they felt good, dammit!

If you want no-frills force-feedback effects, you should save your dough and get the less expensive WingMan Force 3D instead of the Strike Force. If you want the best feedback stick still being made today, however, go with the Force Feedback 2.

### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS** Excellent button placement, comfortable; great programming software; plenty of buttons and hats.

**LOWS** Some force effects are a bit weak and loose; unit is too light.

**BOTTOM LINE** If force feedback is your thing and you can find this stick for \$20 or \$30 less than the Force Feedback 2, get it. Otherwise, try it first to see if you like it.

## THRUSTMASTER

# FIRESTORM DUAL POWER GAMEPAD

### COMPANY

ThrustMaster  
www.thrustmaster.com

### PRICE

\$39.99 (M.S.R.P.)

**O**nce upon a time, ThrustMaster was the joystick company. If you're relatively new to PC gaming, think "Microsoft" or "Logitech" and you'll have a good idea of what we mean when we say that. For some time now, though, ThrustMaster has been off of its game.

Many of its most recent joysticks have failed to impress, and its gamepads have left a lot to be desired, too. But despite the

company's past hardships, we're pleased to report that the Firestorm Dual Power could very well be the start of a new, better direction for ThrustMaster.

Much like every other gamepad on the market, the first thing you'll notice about the Firestorm is its Battering-inspired design. What you can't see from a picture, however, is this pad's dual force-feedback motors. Like the Logitech WingMan RumblePad we reviewed in our November 2000 issue, these motors allow for some pretty snazzy rumbling effects when used with force feedback-enabled games. Don't worry, though: even though the forces can get pretty strong at times, they're never so earth-shattering that they negatively affect gameplay; the effects simply add a level of immersion not possible with an ordinary gamepad.

Another great feature that's becoming more common these days is dual analog sticks—and the Dual Power's got them, too. They come in handy in all sorts of racing and action games in which a digital pad doesn't quite cut it in the precision department. You can turn these sticks on and off on the fly by pressing the unmarked button at the top of the pad.

Strangely, this feature is in keeping with the rest of the pad's 13 programmable buttons—not a single one's labeled. This got to be a bit frustrating for us when trying to remember which button did what in some of our games—especially when the pad's half-baked programming software doesn't do the best job of informing you, either. The software works well enough; it simply isn't well documented. Play around with it for a minute or two and you'll get the hang of it.

Overall, we enjoyed the pad and are still using it. It might not come with the best software in the world, and we'd certainly have liked to see labels on those buttons, but it's clearly a step in the right direction for ThrustMaster, and a fine pad overall.

### FINAL VERDICT

**HIGHS** Very comfortable; loads of buttons; force feedback; textured plastic feels good in your hands.

**LOWS** No labels on buttons; poor programming software documentation; software interface lacks polish.

**BOTTOM LINE** Gamers looking for a new gamepad should definitely keep the Firestorm Dual Power in mind.





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# LUMBERING MOUNTAIN

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"He can't wait to eat...er...meet you!"



*"With a complex story and beautifully crafted 3-D graphics, the single-player game offers the kind of depth that's been sorely lacking in action games lately." -- Rolling Stone*





## EXTENDED PLAY

ADD-ONS · SCENARIO DISCS · UPGRADES · BUG PATCHES

## Deus Next

Modmakers turn to Warren Spector's *Unreal*-driven opus, crafting a bleak political allegory of Middle East violence.



As *Cold Hearted*'s main character, cyborg 999-999, you're a ruthless killer with the means to get it done.

**D**eus Ex transported you to a dark, paranoid near-future in which shadowy government groups send nanotech-augmented agents into battle against domestic terrorists, while a bizarre virus burns through the population.

Not exactly a pleasant picture of a sunny tomorrow. But now that Ion Storm has released the *Deus Ex* Software Developer's Kit at [www.deusex.com](http://www.deusex.com), modders are turning their careful attentions to Warren Spector's future-noir vision. And their takes will be yet darker.

One of the early promising projects in development is *Cold Hearted*, from a mod team calling itself Ravaged Entertainment. In *de rigueur* mod-development style, the group's members are scattered all over the globe—the team leaders, Djamel Hassain and Stephen Morris (both based in the United Arab Emirates), are 17 and 18 years old, respectively.

**COLD HEARTED**

*Cold Hearted* is set shortly after the conclusion of the events in *Deus Ex*. Critical energy shortages have led to a civil war

over electrical reserves. Needless to say, the augmented shadow rulers of America have a vested interest in safeguarding an electrical supply, so they've sent their best attack dog, the cyborg 999-999, into battle against the non-augmented. (That means ordinary Americans.)

You play as 999-999, the pulmonary-frosted title character. As the hardest of the cybernetically hard-assed, you kill without compunction and do whatever's needed to fulfill the objectives of your nefarious overlords. Altogether, your mission is not even the superficially benevolent one that J.C.

Denton undertook in *Deus Ex*. In *Cold Hearted*, you're just plain bad news—the faithful executioner.

"I felt that too many games involved you either being the good guy or the bad guy, and occasionally a swap of teams, but the morals could clearly be seen," says Hassain.

Inspired partly by the endless insanity of Middle East violence, Hassain hopes to use *Cold Hearted* as a political allegory about the strife in his corner of the world.

"Both races [augmented and natural human] are very different in nature and find it hard to coincide as one nation; think India and Pakistan or Israel and Palestine," explains Hassain. "A lot of times the reasons may seem silly or obscure, but that's life."

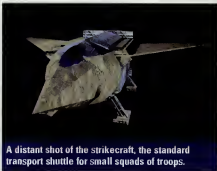
Needless to say, *Cold Hearted* won't exactly be an optimistic appraisal of human nature. With "a terrifying commitment to any mission given," 999-999 is encouraged to kill anyone or anything that gets in his path. But you can count on 999-999 coming to some bitter realizations about the cost of his blind loyalty, and suddenly finding the tables turned on him.

"I want this mod to be lifelike," says Hassain. "The world is a harsh place to the naïve. Humanity's on the brink of collapse; everyone is terrified, which only brings out the worst in people."

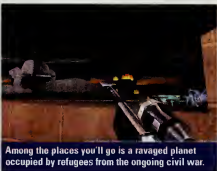
Stephen Morris adds, "The project will exude a very gritty and dark atmosphere, enforcing the idea of dark malice."

Ravaged Entertainment plans to use the engine's cinematic capability to provide much of the same immersive storytelling style of *Deus Ex*. They've also got plans to script decision-for-kick moments like the one that made the end of *Deus Ex* so schizophrenically satisfying.

"Dialogue between characters will be sharp and adaptive," notes Morris. "You may be forced to make hard decisions that

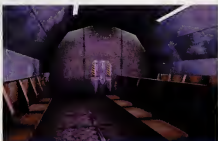


A distant shot of the strikecraft, the standard transport shuttle for small squads of troops.



Among the places you'll go is a ravaged planet occupied by refugees from the ongoing civil war.





This look at the strikecraft's interior shows the extensive detail going into *Cold Hearted's* settings.

are completely [immoral], but to succeed, decisions have to be made, and they may not always be the right ones."

### AUGMENTING UNREAL

Since its release, modders have only been able to drool over *Deus Ex* without doing anything about it — initially, Ion Storm was not going to release its SDK (which had modified the *Unreal* engine pretty heavily). But the company eventually relented, even putting the SDK front and center on the *Deus Ex* website.

The Ravaged Entertainment team contains no members with any professional experience, but all of them have significant experience modding the *Unreal* engine. After digging through the guts of the thing for a while, they got started in earnest on their mod.

"I had actually joined a mod team before, but to my dismay found that nothing much was happening," says Hassain. "Then my best friend came to me with the idea of creating our own mod, so we both put in ideas and here we are."

"Currently most of our members are still in college. The team is a collection of people who are highly skilled in each of their particular areas, and who are also versatile and can support others in the various fields."

"They may not be professionals, but their ambition level is high. Now that companies



The back side of the strikecraft. Care to come aboard?

like Infogrames and Sierra have released amateur-designed mod batches in support of releases like *Unreal Tournament* and *Half-Life*, Ravaged Entertainment has its eye on the brass ring of publisher sponsorship. Not that they're ready to go corporate or anything.

"To be shown interest by Ion Storm for actual publishing would be our ultimate goal, but the real reason we're doing this is for fun," says Hassain.

Morris adds what might be a very eloquent tagline for the indie movement in mod development: "I'd say that our hopes for the project are what most teams want: to become a permanent part of the public's lives, to be remembered, and for [our product] to direct us toward becoming a fully professional team known for producing quality work."

"I'm personally a great fan of *Tactical Ops*, and seeing it reach such a high level of recognition was very inspiring. The gaming industry is finally able to start recognizing and displaying the level of skill certain teams have, and has a chance to catapult them into the limelight."

Our early look at the design of *Cold Hearted* shows the skill and zeal of Ravaged Entertainment. If they can deliver the dark, dynamic, thematically complex experience they seem capable of, they won't have to worry about finding that limelight.

C&C

You can follow *Cold Hearted's* development on a regular basis through the mod community at [www.planetunreal.com](http://www.planetunreal.com).

### BUG PATCHES

**NOTE:** Always check the included README files for a complete listing of fixes and enhancements.

- **Unreal Tournament 436 Patch (utpatch436.exe)**
  - Fixed joystick button handling code
  - Fixed crash for servers with more than 255 characters worth of server packages
  - Fixed problems with single-player ladder that cropped up in 432
  - Server now reports to clients whether or not they are password-protected
  - In the editor, the "TextureLock" option should work 100 percent now
  - Brush clipping was merging faces on the resulting brush in the editor
- **C&C: Red Alert 2 v. 1.002 (Ra2102en.exe)**
  - Fixed the "Place Structure Anywhere" Paratroopers issue
  - Occupying Tech Buildings will now uncover the Shroud at that location
  - Modified Auto Save to save each mission, rather

than saving over the same file every time

- **Rune v. 1.01 (RunePatch101.zip)**
  - Updated Glide driver
  - Fixed inventory-disappear bug
  - Dangler eating you occasionally caused you to go invisible
  - Bosses can no longer be pushed by blast powerup
  - Door occasionally not opening in Thor1
  - Ability to connect as SarkRagnar in multiplayer
- **Flanker 2.0 v. 2.03a (flanker2\_203a.exe)**
  - Fixed model for AI planes improved; AI no longer invincible
  - Corrected problem of model-swapping during destruction
  - Fixed trim pulling to the right if rudder pedals installed
  - Realistic AI delay when IR missile launched at AI
  - Ability to land on carrier added to network play
- **Crimson Skies v. 1.02 (CrimSK102.exe)**
  - Improved stability in multiplayer games
- Reduction in swap-file size
- Improved mission-load times
- **Starship Troopers: Terrain Ascendancy v. 1.1 (TroopersFullPatch1.1.zip)**
  - Fixes the common "drop to desktop" problem, as well as other USB and input device-related crashes.
- **Escape from Monkey Island v. 1.1 (MonkeyUpdate.exe)**
  - Corrects an issue with selecting your 3D pass-through card when the primary card has 3D capability
  - Corrects minor sound issues in various areas of the game
  - Fixes the ability to complete puzzle on Lucre Island that uses the music box. Wait, what music box?
  - Fixes the inability to find the chief after following him into the kitchen
- **Midtown Madness 2 v. 1.01 (mm2pat.exe)**
  - Fixes incompatibilities with the Intel 810 family of graphics chips



## THE POINT AFTER

BASEBALL · BASKETBALL · FOOTBALL · HOCKEY · GOLF · SOCCER · ETC.

## It's Still PC for Me

Smoke revisits the PC-versus-console debate in the sports arena, and finds different players but a similar game.

Just about a year ago, I wrote a column discussing the pros and cons of Sega's Dreamcast, and whether it was an essential purchase for sports gamers. Though pretty much every other gaming publication and website declared *NFL 2K* and *NBA 2K* an epiphany, I believed they were fun to play but didn't offer a superior experience to what was already available on the PC. Dreamcast fanboys were enraged by my "blasphemy," but a lot of you wrote in saying you agreed with my assessment.

With the release of the next iteration of these two games, as well as other sports franchises arriving on both Dreamcast (DC) and Sony's new PlayStation 2 (PS2), I thought it was a good time to see where we stood. Should we put our PCs out to pasture? Not a chance. I'll be hanging onto mine for the time being, thank you.

■ **HOCKEY** *NHL 2001* for the PC is perhaps the finest rendition of the sport we've ever played. Expertly combining a phenomenally realistic game with the familiar arcade action we've grown to love, EA Sports' premier title is a hockey game for everyone, from novice to purist. The series also debuted on the PS2, but with missing features, poor frame-rate issues, and sloppy transitions between animations. The gameplay remained solid, but many of the coaching options were absent, as was the franchise mode. The PC version also easily won the beauty contest: few games look as sharp as *NHL 2001* on the PC. The Dreamcast hockey game released last year, *NHL 2K*, was laughable, and no match for either of the last two years' EA Sports games. In fact, there won't even be a new version this year.

■ **BASEBALL** It's the superb PC version of *High Heat 2001* versus...the atrocious, fielding-less, mind-numbingly boring *World Series Baseball 2K1* for the DC. There's little more to say on the subject, other than that

*High Heat* and an unnamed Japanese title (Americanized upon release, I'm sure) will be available for the PS2 come next season. For now, though, there's no competition—even from other PC baseball titles.

■ **BASKETBALL** Here's one of the few sports where you could make a case for the consoles, and I'd be willing to listen. (Though you'd be wrong.) The new *NBA 2K1* features many improvements over its predecessor, but I still prefer *NBA Live 2000* on the PC, both for its greater depth and for the way it plays. The quality gap has closed somewhat from last year, but I expect it to widen ever further once *Live 2001* shows up in January. The PC version of *Live* has seen steady improvements every year since the franchise began, and I don't expect that to change this year, as the designers refine the AI, enhance the graphics, and add to the feature list. I haven't had a chance to see the PS2 version, so I can't comment on it.

■ **FOOTBALL** Well, you can't win 'em all. Pigskin pleasure on the PC has been surpassed, and in a big way, by both Dreamcast and PS2 entries. *Madden NFL 2001* on PC is a gorgeous, deep, and very playable game, but it just can't match up to either *NFL 2K1* on Dreamcast or *Madden NFL 2001* on PS2. With *NFL 2K1*, the running-game problems present in *NFL 2K* have been eliminated, online arcade play has become a reality (via SegaNet), and a franchise mode has been added (though it's somewhat limited in that it doesn't save player stats from year to year). *Madden NFL 2001* on the PS2 is as good as sports gaming gets, with unbelievable control, features that are better-implemented than those in the PC version, and animations that blow the PC version's away. Truthfully, though, if as much attention was paid to the PC version as was given to the PS2 version, the shoe might have been on the other foot.



The PS2 may rule football with *Madden 2001* (top), but the PC has amazing titles like *Links 2001*.

Regardless, if you want the best football game ever created, you're going to have to purchase a PS2.

■ **SOCCER** It's a pretty even race between the PC and PS2 versions of EA Sports' FIFA series. The Dreamcast is still waiting for a decent soccer game, with both *Striker 2000* and *Virtua Striker 2* proving disappointing.

■ **TENNIS** Okay, here's another nod to the consoles. *Virtua Tennis* for the Dreamcast would have won by default (the PC hasn't had a new tennis title in over a year; the PS2 has no tennis title), but even if the PC and PS2 were brimming with tennis games, these games would have to be pretty special to beat out Sega's new classic.

■ **GOLF** The PC's way, way ahead here. Three great franchises (Jack Nicklaus, PGA Championship, and Links) are battling for supremacy, and each has loyal supporters. The closest the consoles have come is the DC's *Tee Off Golf*, a fun but very limited game compared to the juggernauts on PC.

So there you have it. The PC is still in command of the playing field. We'll report back in another year and see if the consoles are nipping any closer on the PC's heels. **PCCG**

| THE SCORECARD        | HOCKEY   | BASEBALL         | BASKETBALL    | FOOTBALL        | SOCCER                         | TENNIS        | GOLF                                 |
|----------------------|----------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| PC                   | NHL 2001 | HIGH HEAT 2001   | NBA LIVE 2001 | MADDEN NFL 2001 | FIFA 2001                      | NA            | JACK NICKLAUS, PGA CHAMP, LINKS 2001 |
| DREAMCAST            | NHL 2K   | WORLD SERIES 2K1 | NBA 2K1       | NFL 2K1         | STRIKER 2000, VIRTUA STRIKER 2 | VIRTUA TENNIS | TEE OFF GOLF                         |
| SONY PLAYSTATION 2   | NHL 2001 | NA               | NBA LIVE 2001 | MADDEN NFL 2001 | FIFA 2001                      | NA            | NA                                   |
| and the winner is... | PC       | PC               | PC            | PS2             | PC & PS2                       | DC            | PC                                   |



COLIN WILLIAMSON  
killingbox@pcgamer.com

# THE KILLING BOX

3D ACTION GAMING · MODS · DEATHMATCHING · CLANS · TRENDS

OPINION

## Doom on the Go

With a Palm, a Game Boy Color, or a PocketPC, you can experience FPS action in the palm of your hand.



Itching to play *Doom* on the road? A Windows CE machine is your ticket to old-school slaughter.

Portable computing technology has gotten to the level where pocket-sized devices can deliver major multimedia punch. But rather than bettering ourselves by partaking of great works of fiction, or cracking open some enlightening tome of knowledge, we should be using this profound new handheld technology to exterminate evil.

We start our quest for portable mayhem at the lowest end of the spectrum. Attempting to find decent first-person shooters on, say, the Game Boy Color is going to be difficult: 8MHz Z80 chips are not renowned for their polygon-pushing abilities. Nevertheless, you should be able to procure a cheap copy of Xanth Software's *FaceBall 2000*, a bare-bones FPS that allows for networked, four-player deathmatches. *FaceBall* is a great way to pass the time — especially if you're stuck in the back of an auditorium during a lecture course.

On the other hand, if you'd like to maintain your professional image while popping alien heads, you can snag a PalmPilot and a copy of James McCombe's *Dreading* (available at [www.dreading.com](http://www.dreading.com)). Originally titled *Doomling* — and renamed for obvious legal reasons — this little marvel of bare-bones hardware coding is essentially a palm-sized *Wolfenstein 3D*. Boasting textured walls, animated enemy sprites, and pseudo light-level effects, the game pulls a sweet 20fps (or even higher if you're a total geek and overclock your Palm).

Register the shareware version and you'll get a full-featured level editor and resource compiler. Impressive.

Of course, this is all child's play once you've got the original *Doom* running on your PocketPC. Thanks to Panutat Tejasen's *Doom4CE* port (available at [www.jimmysoftware.com](http://www.jimmysoftware.com)), it's more than possible to battle through "The Shores of Hell" — with full sound — while sandwiched between people on the subway. There's even support for user-created WAD files, so you can pound through *Doom II*, *Ultimate Doom*, or *Final Doom* on the way to work. As with the Palm games, the only major limitation comes from the lousy placement of buttons on the hardware itself. Now, if only we could have full-fledged deathmatch via the infrared port, or via a wireless Internet service...

And for those who will only settle for the best, modern-day laptops have gotten tinier and faster, and a bunch of 'em have



First-person-shooter action on a Palm? You bet your stylus!

halfway-decent 3D hardware so you can play *Quake III* at a decent clip. Best of all, pint-sized marvels like the latest Sony VAIOs have built-in Ethernet connectors, so it's possible to have a mini-LAN party anywhere you go. Don't forget to bring a battery-powered hub!

PCG

## FRAGGING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE DAY

As far as fragging on the go is considered, the sky's the limit — literally. This is where I'd like some input from you, the reader, on several potential setups:

- After the proliferation of seat-back "air-phones" with modem connectors, several carriers are installing LANs in their first-class sections. Theoretically, this allows you to play *Quake* at a cruising altitude of 33,000 feet. Has anyone out there attempted an in-flight deathmatch hook-up, and been able to affectively use a mouse in the minuscule tray-table space? Did the sounds of shotguns and magnums disturb the flight attendants in your *relativa* vicinity?
- In Japan, most cars ship with color LCD GPS systems that double as DVD players. Some intrepid gamers hook up their Dreamcasts to these units and power the console via an AC inverter, so in-car conversation can be replaced with *Jet Grind Radio* sessions. I want to hear from you if you've ever played *Quake*, or a derivative, in a moving vehicle. I do not want to hear from you if you were playing *Quake* while driving, and I suggest you stay the hell away from my Camry if you choose to do so again.



"Today's lecture will cover *Half-Life* multiplayer..."

- Having to sit through a dissertation on the mating habits of the holl weevil is not fun. On the other hand, *Half-Life* is fun. If you've ever played your favorite FPS in the middle of class and managed to avoid detection, I want to hear from you. Double the bonus points if you played a network game with another quality party.

So keep these emails coming! I'll print some of the best replies in the coming months, and hand over a prize to the person with the best story.

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## ALTERNATE LIVES

ADVENTURE AND ROLEPLAYING GAMES · NEWS · TRENDS

OPINION

# A Matter of Life and Death

On a serious note, the Wolf explores the realm of online obsession and the anonymity of the internet.

EverQuest, that lip-smackingly addictive online roleplaying game we all know and love, is yet again the focus of Internet intrigue. Gaming sites are buzzing with the story of Sheyla Morrison, 19, who went by the name of Sheyla in EverQuest, a girl who made a lot of friends online and often shared her woeful story of being a struggling mother trying to win back custody of her child. She eventually became a Guide under the username Leza. But after she lost her Guide status, gamers saw a disturbing post on some EverQuest message boards — a note from a relative saying Sheyla had committed suicide.

It turns out, though, that Sheyla never existed. Apparently, a couple had created the character on a shared account, along with Sheyla's supposed sister. It's currently believed that the male half of the couple played Sheyla and Leza, while the woman played her sister. It's been reported that when the couple broke up, the husband pulled the plug on Sheyla in the most dramatic way possible. You can read more about this rather bizarre incident at [www.salon.com/tech/feature/2000/11/21/virtual\\_suicide/index.html](http://www.salon.com/tech/feature/2000/11/21/virtual_suicide/index.html).

What's remarkable about this story is the effect this drama has had on the EverQuest community. Many players had interacted with "Sheyla" for months, and had considered her a friend. This is not uncommon — it's normal for players to begin to form friendships with those they see on a regular basis online.

The episode has cast a revealing light on players who spend inordinate amounts of time playing the game. Reality and make-believe intermingled in the minds of many EQ players, and now they've had to reassess their social dealings within the game.

It's not uncommon to find someone completely immersed in an online world. After all, isn't that one of our own criteria when we review games? But there is definitely a limit, and this EQ episode has reminded me of a chilling example from my own life in which too much involvement in an online world proved a detriment to someone's social reality.

When I was in college, my housemates took in someone who had recently graduated from high school. He sub-leased a room in our house and we expected him to be gone at the end of summer. He wasn't. His parents had kicked him out of their home in an effort to get him out into the real world. He spent so much time on his old Amiga computer talking in bulletin-board chat rooms that his personal skills were lacking; he couldn't hold a job, and he had no ambition to achieve anything other than goals relating to his computer.

Being nice guys, we didn't kick him out. Instead, we helped him get a job. We filled out

applications for him and worked on his resumé. He finally left our house with a job at Jack in the Box — a job he got in large part because we set up interviews and spoke on his behalf — and living arrangements lined up.

The next time I saw him he had lost his job, was staying in a homeless shelter, and was sneaking into the campus computer labs for his online fix.

Granted, he likely had much more serious problems that triggered his online addiction,

but this fixation was enough to put him in a homeless shelter. He was okay with that, as long as he could get at a computer with a hacked online account.

I have no idea where he is today. But I think about him sometimes. I've certainly had my share of online obsessions — my girlfriend and I had some problems when

EverQuest first got its hooks in me. When you start to tell someone you love that you don't have time to spend with

When you tell someone you love that you can't spend time with them because you're trying to solve a quest online, you need to step back from your pastime.

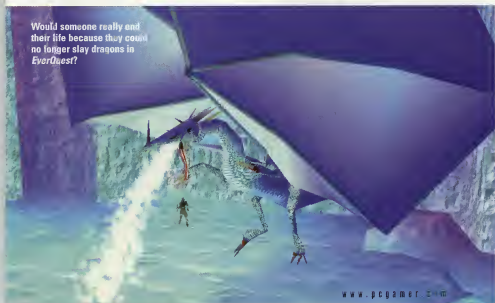
them because you're trying to figure out how to solve a quest online, it's time to take a step back from your pastime.

It was easy for me to take that step back, since my girlfriend (who, amazingly, consented to be my wife) is a rather vocal woman capable of short-circuiting a bad habit before it can permanently damage our relationship. Not everyone is that lucky.

As a result of the EverQuest revelation, "Secias" — a former EQ player who had led the game rule his life — has started a support group for the EverQuest-addicted. He posted a message on Sony's message boards, at <http://boards.station.sony.com/everquest/Forum2/HTML/031570.html>.

Any sort of addiction is frightening, whether it's physical or mental. Addiction to online interactions, obsession with online worlds, and the escapist mentality that goes along with playing an online character can be just as mentally damaging as alcoholism or drug abuse. Luckily, Sheyla turned out to be a suicidal player who never was. But the fact that people would accept the idea of someone killing herself because of a computer game is indicative of a much more serious problem. I love games. I'll play them for the rest of my life. But I maintain a careful separation between my online gaming and the real social and emotional world. I hope you do, too. **PCG**

Would someone really end their life because they could no longer slay dragons in EverQuest?





# Napoleon for the Masses

All of a sudden, Napoleon has us surrounded — and that's a good thing for wargamers and history buffs alike.



The *Waterloo Interactive Battle Simulator*, playable for free online, offers a simple but engaging wargame.

One might expect the "Iron Duke" of Wellington to dismiss the memory of Napoleon — but for wargamers and military history buffs, the Emperor lives on. Few equaled his genius and charisma as a battlefield commander, and no one has surpassed it. His greatest victories have an operatic grandeur that overshadows the gruesome butchery they engendered. Never before or since has wholesale slaughter been conducted by armies clad in such romantic raiment.

Nor has there ever been a commander quite so complex as the vainglorious little Corsican. At various times during his tempestuous career, he was viewed as a great liberator, a Solomonic law-giver, and a black-hearted tyrant. Whatever qualities of greatness you're looking for, whether they be inherently good or majestically evil, Napoleon embodied them.

Thanks to the Public Broadcasting System, which sponsored an eight-hour biographical film about Napoleon by David Grubin, a vast new audience has become fascinated anew with this colossal but enigmatic man. Grubin does a splendid job of dissecting Napoleon's rise from revolutionary firebrand to absolute dictator; he is less successful in charting the military trajectory. At least Grubin makes use of re-enactments to

suggest the nature of Napoleonic combat (and he resolutely eschews any of those cannon-against-the-sunset clichés that made Ken Burns' Civil War documentary so dreary), even though he does it very much on-the-cheap. Based on the preliminary ratings data available at press time, it seems that PBS has kindled a lot of interest in the Napoleonic era.

Interestingly, viewers who want to pursue the matter to the next level can go online ([pbs.org/napoleon](http://pbs.org/napoleon)) and play a simple yet robust simulation of the Battle of Waterloo. After you choose your side, you're presented with an Overview, followed by a Situation Screen and a set of command decisions (one historical, the other a what-if variant). The element of chance is factored in when every choice is executed, so you can never quite predict what will happen.

The beauty of the *Waterloo Interactive Battle Simulator* lies in its clean, elegant use of the most basic wargaming precepts. Under novices can play through the entire battle in 15 minutes, which automatically encourages them to replay things from another side or with a more (or less) risky strategy.

Credit for this superb gamelet goes to veteran designer John Tiller, who described the task this way: "PBS wanted something that would have wide appeal, that wouldn't be too technical, and that would be easy to play. The hardest part was making sure the Java applet ran reliably on a wide variety of systems. I now understand why Java hasn't quite conquered the world the way its advocates were predicting it would a year or two ago."

Tiller didn't want to compromise his standards, but was ever mindful of the audience: "It's easy for wargamers to overestimate how much people understand about history and military matters in general. The key is to avoid putting people in a situation where they must deduce a correct response; it's much better to present them with a fixed number of choices, regardless of the situation. With this approach, the learned wargamer can analyze the various tactical options, while the less-informed player can still get a sense of which choices are risky or conservative. There aren't any 'no brainer' situations in the game, only paths of greater or lesser risk — modified, as are all human actions, by sheer chance."

What did Tiller hope to accomplish with his *Waterloo sim*? "I'm hoping that the impression the average person takes from this game is that battlefield command is a lot harder than you might realize from reading or seeing movies. I also want them to ponder the impact on history of non-historical outcomes. What would subsequent history have been like if Napoleon had prevailed at

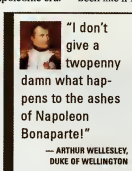
*Waterloo*, as he had a very good chance of doing?"

I recommend the PBS gamelet to all readers: novices will love its simplicity and action, while grognards will admire its admirable distillation of history. For readers who want to see Napoleonic warfare in all its visual splendor, I can recommend two films (both directed by Sergei Bondarchuk): the 1968 Russian version of *War and Peace*, and *Waterloo* (1971), in which Rod Steiger all but chews up the cannonballs as Napoleon.

Meanwhile, waiting in the wings, is Break-Away Games' new version of *Waterloo*, based on the same engine as Sid Meier's *Gettysburg*. I've been playing the beta version for some time now, and I think it's stunningly beautiful.

*Vivre l'Empereur!*

PCG



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# The 'X' Factor

**X-Plane mounts a legitimate one-man challenge to Microsoft's commercial-flight sim monopoly.**

The general aviation-sim genre has been so completely dominated by Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* for the past decade and a half that it's easy to forget how much competition has come and gone. Dynamix's *Pro Pilot* series (R.I.P.) and Looking Glass' *Flight Unlimited* franchise (R.I.P.) sleep beneath the hard deck; only TRI's *Fly!* has managed to persevere and offer fans a viable alternative to the Microsoft machine.

But hang onto your throttle levers, flight simmers. There's another dark horse candidate on the periphery — one that's been spinning its props almost as long as the Gates gang has been buzzing Chicago's skyline. X-Plane is the brainchild of South Carolina-based developer Austin Meyers, an aerospace engineer and private pilot with 600 hours of flight time in Cessna and Piper singles. Meyers created the original sim back in 1988 as an instrument trainer for his personal flight-training needs while attending Iowa State University. He began marketing the finished product on the Internet under his own Laminar Research banner in 1993 (beating out even Microsoft as the first developer to produce a Win 95-compatible flight sim!). Based on the almost slavish level of devotion that X-Plane users have ascribed to the sim's flight dynamics, he succeeded in creating something quite special.

Austin's approach to flight modeling is straightforward. He relies on an engineering process called "blade element theory,"

which entails breaking the aircraft down into many small elements and then determining the forces on each of these individual components many times per second. These forces are then converted into accelerations, which are integrated into velocities and positions. Sound workable? Sure, what the hell. All I know is that X-Plane's flight dynamics are so convincing that many serious flight-sim aficionados consider the product the current standard-bearer for flight-model realism in a commercial sim.

X-Plane version 5.42 was recently unveiled for both Windows and Mac. It certainly wasn't easy to try to match the extended feature list that shipped with FS2000, yet this sim does a commendable job of it. Where FS2000 Pro boasts a crowded hangar of 12 unique prop and jet-powered planes, X-Plane delivers up a whopping four dozen! Just about any category of civilian and military aircraft that you can think of — from a basic Cessna 172, Citation business jet, Boeing 747-400 or Bell helicopter right up to an SR-71 Blackbird, B-2 "Flying Wing," or even the space shuttle *Discovery* — has been lovingly rendered and masterfully tweaked for your flying pleasure.

Also, just as with FS2000, several hundred user-created and downloadable planes are freely available on the Internet. Add in over 18,000 worldwide airports and accurate 3D scenery and digital elevation maps for Canada, Australia, Japan, Europe, and all 50 U.S. states (with tons more third-party stuff lurking on fan sites all over the web), and you wind up with a formidable general aviation simulator that can hold its own with any other retail product. Advanced users can also take advantage of the sim's real-world weather effects, fully functional Air Traffic Control and GPS implementation, and bundled Plane-Maker and World-Maker utilities (for building your own aircraft and scenery).



X-Plane pilots can fly the space shuttle *Discovery* from orbital re-entry all the way to touchdown.



Detailed instrument panels and convincing visual touches are trademarks of this remarkable sim.

So there's gotta be a downside here somewhere, right? After all, some ridiculously over-the-top hardware requirements managed to severely compromise the approval ratings for FS2000, so it's only fair to assume that X-Plane must have a loose rivet or two of its own. Well, I've been playing the latest build for the better part of two weeks now, and I'm still trying to uncover any serious glitches. Sure, the sim may not boast the most rookie-friendly interface or the most comprehensive user's manual, but casual flyers aren't really the intended audience. Its OpenGL graphics engine can also generate some visual anomalies with Voodoo-based accelerator cards, but nothing serious enough to detract from the experience.

Apart from its above-average price — which was recently slashed from around \$200 to just under \$90 (including shipping) through Meyers's [www.x-plane.com](http://www.x-plane.com) website — the product is truly about as airtight as they come. In fact, by the time you read this, a new distribution deal Meyers struck with Xicat Interactive will put boxed copies of the sim on retail shelves for less than \$40. It's time to be afraid, Microsoft — very afraid. **PCG**

## X-PLANE YOURSELF

There are a lot of little guys spread all over half's hail-acre, but the chief repositories can be found at AvSim (<http://www.avsim.com>) and through Austin Meyers' extensive links page on his own X-Plane.com site (<http://www.x-plane.com/subculture.html>).



The OpenGL graphics employed in X-Plane are responsible for some mighty impressive sky and cloud textures.



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## COMING SOON...

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Strategy First



# C&C: Red Alert 2 Multiplayer

Rule the World of *Red Alert 2* in 15 Minutes (well, 45 minutes if you use AOL).

Rather than sending in eight helpless units at a time, gather all of your Paratroopers together and make it an attack.



**Y**ou had your fun working through the single-player portion of *Red Alert 2*. You got to see Karl Wuhrer in a variety of tight outfits, along with some real bad acting. But the real fun is just beginning. Clearly, the best part of any C&C game is multiplayer, and *Red Alert 2* is no exception. The incredible unit balance and variety of strategies make this an easy game to play and a difficult one to master. In the next four pages we're going to give you a variety of ways to confuse, annoy, and decimate opponents. One word of warning: there's a defense for every offense in *RA2*, so remember to mix it up.

## THE ALLIES

In keeping with *Red Alert* tradition, the Allies initially seem like the weaker of the two sides, but this simply isn't true. The Soviets are more powerful, but the Allies' ability to attack specific weak spots, cloak their base(s), and see the whole map is a huge advantage that definitely sways the balance of power to at least even.

## ALLIED ATTACKS

No matter how much fun you're having building a pretty base and collecting money, at some point you have to attack your opponent

in order to win. (This isn't *SimCity*, after all.) There are several ways to attack opponents, so we've gathered a few specific strategies for your amusement (and your enemy's agony).

**ENGINEER RUSH:** An oldie but a goodie. This attack can swing the power of a game in the first five minutes.

- What you need: Engineers (duh), IFVs, and Scouting
- What you do: Scout the map with initial troops and find an enemy base. Find the weakness in the defenses and race over with an engineer (or two or three) in an IFV. Unload the engineer(s) and take over an expensive building. The Construction Yard is ideal, but unless you're playing a complete moron, it will be well defended. So go for buildings like Ore Refineries and War Factories. Take over the buildings and sell them.

**AIR STRIKE:** Another good early-game strike that'll only work once, so target it effectively.

- What you need: 2 Airforce Command Centers, (at least) 6 Harriers, Scouting
- What you do: Scout the map and find the enemy base, and see if it has significant air defenses. (If it already has Flak Troopers and a couple of ground-to-air defenses, then don't even try an air strike.) Find the best angle of attack and guide your Jets to take out a big building. By the time you come back for a second run the defenses will probably be in place, but you never know. Load up and go for another building.



A group of Rocketeers can eliminate Ore Miners and other unprotected vehicles and then scamper away before anti-air help arrives. Annoying and effective.



When used together, Weather Storm, Chronosphered Prism Tanks, and Harrier Jets can take down an entire base in less than a minute. This brutal three-pronged technique has been known to make opponents weep openly.

**SPY GAMES:** Effective only if your opponent forgets about attack dogs, but if you pull it off, it can give you a huge lift.

- What you need: A spy, Scouting
- What you do: Find the enemy base and build up the tech tree so you can make spies (Battle Lab). Now create a spy and disguise him as a common enemy unit. Send him into the Ore Refinery to get instant cash, into the War Factory to make all of your armored units get produced at Veteran level (a huge advantage), or into the Barracks to make all of your infantry come out at Veteran level. If your opponent doesn't notice the first attack, then repeat until he gets a clue and puts some dogs on patrol.

**ROCKETEER GAMES:** A multi-purpose annoyance that'll drive your opponent to the brink of madness.

- What you need: 10 Rocketeers, 1 Black Heart
- What you do: Quickly move up the tech tree so you can build Rocketeers (Barracks, Airforce Command Center), then build a nice army of Rocketeers (10 or more). Now send off your units to

scour the map for Ore Miners, idle units (without air defense), and unprotected buildings. As soon as any type of air defense starts heading your way, get the Rocketeers out of there. Continue doing this throughout the game. The constant attacks will occasionally knock out an Ore Miner, some key units, and even a building or two. But, more importantly, your opponent will be worrying about your Rocketeers while you're left to build up a massive land or sea component.

**WHO LET THE DOGS OUT:** More funny than devastating, and it doesn't cost much for a good laugh.

- What you need: 10 Attack Dogs
- What you do: Crank out 10 Attack Dogs right from the start and begin terrorizing any infantry on the map, while typing in things like "You are no match for my dogs. Surrender now and I'll spare you." Don't ever get close to vehicles or bases, since the dogs are good only against infantry.

**LIGHTNING STRIKES THRICE:** You'll need time and money to pull this off effectively, but it can absolutely destroy an enemy in minutes.

- What you need: Weather Machine, Chronosphere, (at least) 4 Harrier Jets, 6 Prism Tanks, Spy Satellite
- What you do: Wait until your Weather Machine and Chronosphere are ready. Now launch the Weather Storm near the Construction Yard. (Make sure there are plenty of Power Plants in the area.) While the destruction rattles your enemy, Chronosphere a group of Prism Tanks into a weak area of his base (i.e., one with no units or major defenses). At the same time, launch your Harrier Jets to finish off his construction yard. With power down (from Weather Storm) and Construction Yard destroyed (by Weather Storm/Jets), the Prism Tanks should begin taking out key structures like War Factories, Barracks, and Ore Refineries. This is made especially easy because when a storm is launched, opponents often rush all of their units out of the base to spare them. This means your Prism Tanks are all alone in a defenseless base. Absolutely devastating.

**DOUBLE BLUFF:** This attack can work with any number of unit combinations and is lethal against anybody who defends their base with units instead of structures.

- What you need: 30 GIs, 10 to 15 Tanks (any kind will do, but Prism are the most devastating).
- What you do: Gather up two separate attack forces: the fake (GIs) and the real one (tanks). Send in the fake force on one side of the base; be sure to bunker your GIs, or the fake ones won't draw enough attention. Now run the second attack force (from your cloaked base) to the exact opposite side of the base. While the defender sends all of his units to wipe out your pitiful attack, send the tanks in the back and wipe out his base.

#### ALLIED CHECKLIST

##### NEVER...

- Leave an attack force sitting still. You're just asking for Terror Drones, Rocketeers, or Demolition Trucks to wipe them out.



Never build a super weapon and leave it unprotected. Smart enemies will immediately take it out before you can use it.

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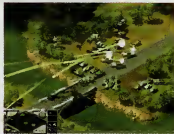
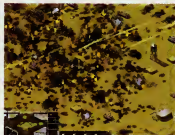
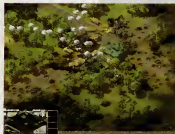
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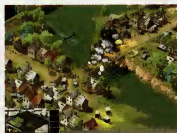
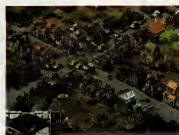
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## SUDDEN STRIKE



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- A huge technological hierarchy of more than 300 upgrades
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- Full 3D landscape with real world physics



"Authentic and  
visually captivating..."  
Gamespot



Coming Soon



ZD Net





10 Tesla Troopers early in the game can spell instant defeat for an unprepared foe.

- Send Rocketeers against air defenses. The Rocketeers will lose, always.
- Build a Weather Machine without defenses already in place. They're too expensive and take too long to make, and the enemy always knows where they are.

**ALWAYS...**

- Build a Gap Generator. Enemies can't kill what they can't see.
- Build a Spy Satellite. You can kill what you can see.
- Attack weak points. The enemy always has them, and with the Spy Satellite you should know where they are.
- In a well-defended base, take out Power Plants first. Without power, defenses like Tesla Coils and Prism Towers are completely useless. You can easily get the big buildings when there are no defenses.

**ALLIED UNIQUE UNITS**

In multiplayer mode, each country features a unique unit. Choose a country whose unit suits you best.

- **Great Britain:** Sniper — Excellent against infantry, and a couple of them can sway the power early in the game. Later in the game, put them in an IFV, or they'll be completely useless. **Special strategy:**

Place a couple of Snipers in the trees (or some kind of cover) just in range of the enemy barracks. Each time a unit is made it will be killed, and since it happens so fast, it may take the enemy a while to catch on.

- **America:** Paratroopers — One of the best special weapons available. Once you build an Airforce Command Center, you periodically get free GIs dropped anywhere on the map. **Special strategy:** Drop all of your GIs in one area just outside your enemies' base. Gather up about 30 of them and rush the backside of the base. This strategy can be devastating.
- **France:** Grand Cannon — The Grand Cannon is expensive and pretty much useless. What did you expect from the French?
- **Germany:** Tank Destroyers — Effective against other tanks, but their slow rate of fire and speed makes them useless unless supported by other vehicles like Prism Tanks.
- **Korea:** Black Eagle Jets — Better armor than the normal jets, but a pretty weak special weapon since standard air defense is so cheap and effective.

**THE SOVIETS**

The Soviets have a mighty combination of power and numbers. Big tanks, strong troops,

and fast production mean they have the upper hand in any toe-to-toe battle. However, the Allied espionage and air advantages can be overwhelming. Here are a few ways to get the most out of the comble bastids.

**SOVIET ATTACKS**

The Soviets don't have the ability to annoy like the Allies, but with such powerful forces, they've got plenty of ways to take out the enemy.

**ENGINEER RUSH:** Works for the Soviets as well. In fact it works better for them.

- What you need: 5 Engineers (duh), Flak Trak
- What you do: Scout the map with initial troops and find an enemy base. Find the weakness in the defenses and race over a truck full of engineers. Unload engineers and take over an expensive building. The Construction Yard is ideal, but unless you're playing a complete moron, it will be well defended. So go for buildings like Ore Refineries and War Factories. Take over the buildings and sell them.

**TESLA TROOPER RUSH:** A great way to take out an enemy in a short period of time.

- What you need: 10 Tesla Troopers
- What you do: Build an Ore Refinery, then a Barracks and start cranking out Tesla Troopers. As soon as you get 10 of them, head for an enemy base. The power of the Tesla Troopers is extremely high early in the game, and because they can't be run over by tanks, they can annihilate an enemy who isn't prepared.

**DEMOLITION DERBY (Libya only):** Devastating early attack if you find a weakness in the enemy base.

- What you need: 3 Demolition Trucks
- What you do: Send in the first truck to take out any defenses and troops in the area, and then immediately send in the next two trucks to decimate the base.

**DESOLATION (Iraq only):** Great for controlling areas of the map (the good gems).



Send in one Demolition Truck to take out initial defenses, then use two more for the crushing blow. (Works only for Libya.)





Nothing fancy about this: get a bunch of big-ass tanks and storm the proverbial castle. Still damn effective.

- What you need: 3 Desolators, 3 Terror Drones
- What you do: Once you have the units (and know the place you want to control), send them to the proper areas. The Desolators should make a triangle around the area and use their special attacks. The Terror Drones should sit in the middle and wait for enemy vehicles to come by. The Desolators will wipe out any infantry and the Terror Drones will destroy any vehicles. Now you can send in your Ore Miners for the good stuff.

**TERRORIZING ORE MINERS:** Nothing is more annoying than not knowing how all of your Ore Miners were destroyed.

- What you need: 4 Terror Drones (or one for each miner you can find)
- What you do: Walk the Terror Drones after Miners and let them slowly destroy each and every one. This works better against the Soviet War Miners because the Terror Drones are dumped out when the Allied Chrono Miner shifts back to the Ore Refinery. It's pretty cheap, and even if it doesn't destroy all miners, it'll seriously set back your opponent.

**DEATH FROM ABOVE:** The mighty Kirov can destroy an entire base in minutes, no matter how many Patriots your enemy tries to build.

- What you need: 2 Kirovs, 10 Flak Troopers, and 10 Tesla Soldiers
- What you do: Use way-pointing to send all of the units around the edge of the map to an enemy's base. The Flak Troopers will defend against Rocketeers (which are the best way to take down Kirovs) and the Tesla Troopers will defend the Flak Troopers from land vehicles. The reason you send the attack around the edges is so you don't alert anybody. Once a Kirov gets to an enemy base, it's all over. If the enemy sees the attack coming, however, the slow-moving blimp is done for.

**TANK RUSH:** This one's simple, pure, and oh-so-effective.

- What you need: A bunch of tanks (all kinds, but Mammoth and Tesla are preferred)
- What you do: Build up a bunch of tanks and send them into an enemy base. Start with the power stations and then go crazy. Now laugh while you enjoy the oldest and most glorious of Red Alert victories. The pure power of Soviet tanks makes this an extremely effective way to end the game.

#### SOVIET CHECKLIST

##### NEVER...

- Leave a Kirov undefended. They are too slow, too expensive, and too powerful to lose because you forgot to defend them.
- Build a Nuclear Power Plant. When enemies destroy one, it's like a nuclear bomb going off in your base. Not something you want to deal with.
- Build a Nuke without defenses already in place. They're too expensive and take too long to make, and the enemy always knows where they are.

##### ALWAYS...

- Build an Iron Curtain. Sending in a group of invincible (for a short time, anyway) units can completely wipe out an unprotected base.
- Build a Kirov. Don't let the enemy get away without having to worry about air defenses.
- Have plenty of power. There's nothing more annoying than having a bunch of Tesla Coils that don't work.
- Build a Cloning Vat. Twice the infantry at half the price can create some pretty powerful attacks and defenses.

#### SOVIET UNIQUE UNITS

Choosing the Soviet side in a multiplayer game also means selecting a specific country with its own unique unit.

- **Libya:** Demolition Truck — A mobile nuclear bomb. These can be extremely effective if used properly. **Special attack:**

Use the Iron Curtain on a number of Demolition Trucks, then race them into the middle of the enemy base. Once the Iron Curtain wears off, watch your enemy's base go up in green.

- **Iraq:** Desolator — This infantry unit fires a radiation weapon that fries infantry in a single burst. The special attack can blow out an entire field of infantry. These are pretty useless against defenses or vehicles, but they absolutely destroy infantry.
- **Russia:** Tesla Tank — A mobile Tesla Coil that can absolutely destroy units and buildings in seconds. Bad armor is its only weakness, but if you build enough of them, it isn't even fair.
- **Cuba:** Terrorist — Inexpensive, but pretty much a one-trick pony. The only effective way to use them is in a suicide run. Put five in a Flak Trak and take down as many units or buildings as you can. **PCG**

## HITLER: BLITHERING TACTICAL IDIOT



**H**itler wasn't just a perverted master of genocide; he was also a tactical imbecile. If it weren't for his moronic military maneuvers, we'd all be speaking German, wearing lederhosen, and eating sauerkraut right now. In *Red*

*Alert 2*, and in real war, we can learn these simple truths from the little Führer.

#### >>> NEVER FIGHT A WAR ON TWO FRONTS

**REAL-LIFE:** In his greed, Hitler fought Russia on one side and the remaining Allies on the other.

**RED ALERT 2:** If you're playing in a game with more than one person, don't piss them both off at the same time. Finish off one opponent before attacking another.

#### >>> NEVER GO INTO RUSSIA IN THE WINTER

**REAL-LIFE:** Just like the miniature dictator (Napoleon) before him, Hitler foolishly pushed deep into Russia in the cold of winter. Supply lines were cut off and the Germans got toasted.

**RED ALERT 2:** Without money (supplies), you don't have a chance. Guard your Ore Miners at all costs.

#### >>> DON'T PISS OFF YOUR ALLIES UNTIL YOU NO LONGER NEED THEM

**REAL-LIFE:** Hitler turned on the Russians because he wanted all of Europe for himself. Unfortunately for him, he could have used their help a while longer.

**RED ALERT 2:** If you make an alliance in a multiplayer game, don't break it until you're relatively certain that you'll be able to defeat your friend-foe.

**C**'mon, something must be on your mind other than the PC-vs.-console debate. They'll co-exist, the PC will always be superior for a variety of reasons, and consoles will always sell well. End of story. So what else is raising your hackles? (That's that tingly sensation when the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end.) Let us know what you think.

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!** Write to us at: PC Gamer Letters, Imagine Media, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005, or email us at: [letters@pcgamer.com](mailto:letters@pcgamer.com).

### YEAH, WHAT THE HECK?

Hello, I'm Arthur, and I love your magazine! Recently, however, my mom has been complaining that I'm not concentrating enough on my work because PC Gamer's so addictive! What the heck? Anyway, I do have one suggestion for you: I think you're getting a little too personal in your magazine. Other than that, it's great!

— Arthur Hsueh, via email

*We're getting too personal? You're talking about your mom in a letter to us. What the heck?*

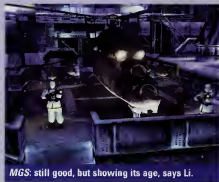
### THE "HECKS" KEEP ON COMIN'

What the heck kind of score is 79% for Metal Gear Solid? Anyone in your area who has played the game is hopefully raising a militia to take over your office in protest. As a fan of both PC and PlayStation games, I simply cannot agree with your comments about one of the best games ever made. Come on, guys! The game is two years old, so of course the graphics are not going to

be fantastic, but what is this crap about clipping? I've played and replayed MGS over a dozen times, and I've never seen any clipping, ghosts, pop-ups, or transparencies that so plague PC games of the same era. And why is Li whining about the lack of force feedback? As for hardcore gamers scoffing at this very original game (remember, the first Metal Gear came out in 1988, long before Thief, Rainbow Six, etc.), maybe it's because they're so used to playing FPS games that involve nothing more than grabbing the biggest gun possible and shooting anything that moves that they simply can't bring themselves to play a game that requires a little thought.

— Lister of Smeg 2175, via email [where else? — Ed.]

*PC Gamer's Li Kuo responds: Let's get one thing clear: 79% is the very top end of "Good," just shy of "Excellent." I fully believe that the hardcore PC gamer has different tastes than a console gamer. (Yes, there are always exceptions.) Regarding force*



MGS: still good, but showing its age, says Li.

*feedback, it was an integral part of the PlayStation version and really helped to immerse you — elevators stopping, Metal Gear Rex stomping — and would have been a welcome addition to the PC version. Also, PC gamers who are used to being able to look everywhere and jump and duck and strafe in their games will feel limited by the control scheme in MGS. As for the clipping problems, everyone in the office noticed them straight away, so I was certainly not alone. Don't get me wrong, "smeg boy" — MGS was terrific on PlayStation, and I still love it on the PC. But games have come a long way since its initial release, and I've come to expect more.*

### MISPLACED MONKEY

Is this the right place to send Coconut Monkey reader art?

— Nick Andrus, via email

*Clearly not. Still, we've decided to run your picture in the magazine instead of on the CD! Congrats!*

### NOTHING IN LIFE IS FREE

After reading your article on freeloader.com (Dec. 2000, page 53), I checked it out. Did you read their policy disclaimers? They share the info you give them with their advertisers. Their disclaimers say you are granting permission for these companies to mail, email, and phone you. The freeloader software will also put "cookies" in your system and monitor your Internet activities, and give out that info as well. The really sneaky thing is that the service only gives you games one level at a time, and to get the next level you have to answer even more personal questions.

**Select Player**

coconut law

AIR ●●●●●

HANG TIME ●●●●●

OLLIE ●●●●●

SPEED ●●●●●

SPIN ●●●●●

LANDING ●●●●●

SWITCH ●●●●●

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hundreds of tricks including the state-fish, madonna, and 720, and is the only person to land the vaunted 900.

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**GOOFY**

BACK SELECT ROTATE ACCEPT

Nick gives Tony the treatment. Send your Coconut Monkey art to [coconutmonkey@pcgamer.com](mailto:coconutmonkey@pcgamer.com).

The last paragraph of your article suggested freeloader was just tailoring the ads you would see while on their website, but in reality, they're doing much more than that. Please look into this and inform your loyal readers of the truth.

— Gary S. Bohart, via email

Gary, your fear of "Big Brother" may have gotten the best of you. As the name implies, *freeloader.com* is a free service: the company is giving away for free games that you'd ordinarily have to pay for. In order to make a profit, *freeloader.com* sells your personal info to advertisers so that when you log on to the site, ads that are most likely to appeal to you are onscreen, and so that, if they want, advertisers can email and/or call you. This would all be a horrible invasion of privacy if *freeloader.com* didn't tell you about it ahead of time — but as you already figured out, they do.

As for tracking your movement around the web, cookies are used so *freeloader's* server knows that it's you that's logging on instead of your neighbor or your uncle. The *freeloader* server reads the cookie and then tailors the site's advertising content based on when you were there last and what ads you were shown at the time.

Hey, believe us, Gary, we understand your concerns: giving out all that info on the web can be a frightening proposition. But that's why you have the right to choose whether or not you want to use this free service.

## DEATH BY BUCKET

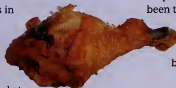
I enjoy all the articles in PC Gamer, but I feel compelled to write you in order to right a wrong. Whatever happened to the hallowed tradition of Bucket

Week? Has it gone the way of the dodo, or is the dream still alive, buried deep in the darkest parts of your collective souls?

— Joseph Haygood, via email

For those who don't know, Bucket Week was something we used to do around here in an effort to bring some sunshine into our otherwise dark, bleak lives. It involved eating a bucket of Kentucky Fried

Chicken (Original Recipe) every day for a week. We'd all sit around the bucket and laugh, cry, sweat, cough, gag, and hurl to our heart's content. We haven't had a Bucket Week in



**UPDATE** Joseph, we're happy to report that based on the comments made by you and other readers, we've decided to reinstate Bucket Week. Look on

in horror as Chuck dunks The Colonel's finest into a vat of gelatinous gravy, or as Jeremy nearly eats his own hands by mistake.

## THE FORCE HAS LEFT US



Bad news. LucasArts has canceled *Obi-Wan* for the PC because, according to their web site, the "limitations of technology and the company's recently heightened quality standards" prevent the developers from making the game they wanted it to be. LEC still thinks the game will be good enough to appear on "a [yet unannounced] next-generation console platform," though. A lot of people I have talked to are really pissed about this, and think LucasArts has just sold its soul to Microsoft so *Obi-Wan* can be an exclusive Xbox title. Damn! LEC hasn't put out a good PC game since *X-Wing Alliance*! This really sucks.

— Marshall Tuckey, via email

Yeah, it does suck, Marshall. But if you read what LEC stated closely, they're pretty much conceding that many of their recent titles haven't lived up to their past quality standards. The wording they chose makes it sound as if *Obi-Wan* might have been average, and we're expecting a stellar game on the scale of *Jedi Knight* (one of the greatest games ever). If that's true, and *Obi-Wan* wasn't shaping up the way they hoped it would, its cancellation could turn out to be a blessing in disguise. And who's not psyched about LucasArts' Verant-developed massively multiplayer game, or its BioWare-developed RPG?

quite a while. Joseph, but now that you've reminded us, we're thinking it might be time to bring the ol' stomach pump/colon scraper (it's a two-in-one unit) out of the closet. Look for more details soon!

## DEAD TO RIGHTS

Hey, why does the rating-system box in the beginning of the reviews section say "New and Improved Rating System" when it's

been the same for at least a year now?

Are some of you guys getting lazy? I know this is a dumb question, but it's really been bothering me lately.

— Ben S., via email

Getting lazy? What are you talking about? We've always been lazy. Actually, at press time, it's been only about eight months — not a year — since we made the change. The fact is, long-time readers don't always read the text in our rating-system box since they figure it's the same as it's always been. We've kept the text the same in order to draw attention to the clarifications of our review-score policy.

## MONTHLY LETTER IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Ik vind dat jullie een prachtig blad maken, met overzichtelijk re- en previews. Met gedgekozen screenshots en een

overzichtelijke structuur. Maar dat jullie ongelukkig brutale opmerkingen maken tegen lezers die enkel proberen een opmerking te maken over jullie blad. Maar ik hield van de manier waarop je die gaat afblafte die probeerde een half jaar nummers voor niks te krijgen.

— Dieter Blomme, via the Babel Fish

Um, yeah.

## "ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN..."

I was surprised that the online multiplayer feature in your Dec. 2000 issue didn't mention *Mankind*. This game has been available for download for quite some time, and has recently been released on CD-ROM if you prefer a hard copy. *Mankind* is a massively multiplayer 3D strategy game that takes place entirely online. It's free if you're only interested in having limited resources, or you can pay \$50 for a year to open up all of your possibilities. I've played it a lot and it runs smoothly even on my not-so-fast computer. If you get a chance, tell your readers to check it out at <http://www.mankind.net/en/>.

— Paul Stabile, via email

Thanks, Paul! We'll be taking a look at this one.

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The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating system can help you decide whether a computer or video game is right for your family. The ESRB system provides both **CONTENT DESCRIPTORS** that indicate whether there are particular content elements which may be of interest or concern, and **RATING Symbols** that tell you what age the game is appropriate for.

### RATING SYMBOLS

(found on the front of the game box):



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### CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

(found on the back of the game box):

The content descriptors tell you whether the game includes elements such as:

- Mild language
- Strong language
- Mild animated violence
- Mild realistic violence
- Comic mischief
- Animated violence
- Realistic violence
- Animated blood and gore
- Realistic blood and gore
- Animated blood
- Realistic blood
- Suggestive themes
- Mature sexual themes
- Strong sexual content
- Use of tobacco or alcohol
- Use of drugs
- Gaming
- Edutainment
- Informational content
- Some assistance may be needed

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Judging by the response to our preview of the revolutionary *Majestic* in the December issue, it's captured your imaginations as much as it has ours. However, uncovering further information about a project shrouded in as much secrecy, denial, and speculation as this one is proving difficult. That's why we had to kidnap the project leader and force him to face the Backspace test...

# Neil Young

## How the devil are you?

Good...maybe even great! I'm very excited about *Majestic*. We've got a very ambitious project to create but it feels like we're on to something really special and revolutionary with this product. At the same time, this is a lot more challenging than I thought it'd be when I started—it's like a 10-point difficulty to execute. Most games innovate at one level; *Majestic* innovates at many levels: original product (that's always hard), new play and distribution mechanics (played in real time and delivered episodically), a new and different distributor (EA.com), and it's on a new and different platform (the internet). Luckily, we have a great team that's working hard on building what we think is the very best, and an exceptionally innovative, experience. I hope people are ready for it.

## What's the best game you've played recently?

On the PC it's *Diablo II*, but I'm playing with my PS2 right now more than my schedule should allow—which basically means that I sleep less.

## What's the worst game you've ever been involved in making?

*Zone Warrior*, a game that I was one of the producers on in 1983, was pretty bad. OK, really bad. But you learn a little something from everything that you do.

## What advice would you give to someone who finds out they're being followed?

Call the FBI—unless, of course, you suspect that they're the people following you.

## When was the last time a computer game drove you to the brink of madness?

I'd say it was probably *Grim Fandango*—a great, great game, but like a lot of adventures, for normal people, it eventually motivates you to buy a hint book or put it away forever. The last game I played until my eyes bled was *Half-Life*, and there were definitely moments when I felt like I was on the brink of madness. Eventually I bought the hint book.

## What's the greatest moment in the history of gaming?

For the industry, it was the invention of *Pong*. For me personally, it was falling off my chair while playing *Rescue on Fractalus*/Behind *Jagged Lines* by Lucasfilm Games (now LucasArts) on my Atari 400. The little spaceman I thought I was rescuing turned out to be a green mutant

and he punched a hole through the windshield of my spaceship. It was then that I realized that games could engage people at a different level than other entertainment mediums.

## Do you regularly check yourself for odd mechanical implants?

Everyone should, although they don't have to be mechanical.

## Have you ever been arrested?

Not in this country.

## Violence in gaming: legitimate concern or media hysteria?

Legitimate concern. Violence for violence's sake is a bad thing, and I see it in some games. Despite this, if we're ever going to turn gaming into a "true" entertainment medium, we, as an industry, need to be free to tackle mature themes, including violence. We need to do this only with mature motivations consistent with pushing the medium, and be prepared to deal with those themes in mature ways. There are freedom of speech issues at stake here that, in part, America is founded upon, and if you're a parent, you should be concerned about balancing those rights with your responsibilities. If you're a kid, don't spend another second worrying about it: you're a kid, and you've got the rest of your life to worry.

What can you tell us about threatening phone calls received by various games journalists regarding *Majestic*?  
Be careful: bad people are everywhere.

## What do you have in your pockets right now?

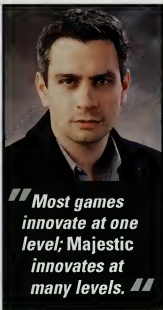
\$33 in crumpled bills, some loose change, a cell phone, an EA security badge, and 23,000 MEMS monitoring my whereabouts and vital signs and communicating them to a base station 19 miles away.

## Kennedy: lone gunman or grassy knoll?

I don't know, but someone, somewhere does.

## Is it me, or is there something definitely weird about those EA buildings in Redwood City?

It's just you; everything is OK. Don't worry, there's nothing to fear. Soon you will have peace.



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It was a slip in the back. It shifted us to the floor. Despite initial relief, the pain, despite my unbalanced distribution, was too much for it. But I did not know I'd be forced on the game at hand. We'd predict ourselves in being one step ahead all the time. Then, it came down to me. I stepped on the line very slowly. That's what they were getting at, that's what they were striving for. We'd missed the boat. Our path had taken us to the top, but we had to hour that we'd get it wrong. Oh, the shame...oh, the crap.

my new pc  
doesn't raise  
the bar. it  
obliterates it.



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- SB Live! Value Digital ■ harman/kardon Speakers
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Dell™ Inspiron™ 4000 Notebook

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- SoundBlaster 64 V PCI LC Sound Card
- PC Speakers
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